

Agenda for the 5th meeting of the Biosafety Committee of the University of Hong Kong. (A sub-committee of the Safety Health and Environment Committee).

To be held on **Monday, 23rd November at 11.00 a.m. in the 1st Floor Library of the Main Safety Office, Cheung Yuet Ming Physics building.**

1. Minutes of the 4th meeting of the Biosafety Committee (15th January 2009)

To confirm the minutes of the 4th meeting which are included as Appendix A.

A summary of the meeting and a consultation carried out by e-mail was prepared by the secretary and sent to the Safety Health and Environment committee for consideration at their meeting on the 12th of May. This is included as Appendix A1. Would the committee prefer to see and approve this type of summary before it is sent to SHEC?

2. Matters arising from the minutes of the 4th meeting.

3. Discussion on the appropriate containment conditions for work with:-

- a) Dengue virus (RG2 - work at BSL2)
- b) *Burkholderia pseudomallei* (RG3 - work at BSL2+)
- c) *Candida albicans*; *Candida spp* (RG1- work at BSL1)

The biosafety policy specifically says (in section 4.2) that the NIH/CDC list of categorisations of biological agents according to risk, is the approved list for work in the University. In two of the three cases above the NIH/CDC approved risk group (indicated in brackets) is one category lower than in Europe and in the case of *B. pseudomallei* although it is RG3 it can be worked on at BSL2+. The significance of this is that for these three agents there is debate about the appropriate containment conditions for laboratory work in HKU. The committee is asked for guidance on work with each of the agents.

Appendix B contains previously circulated material on dengue and brief descriptions of issues associated with *Burkholderia pseudomallei*, *Candida albicans*/ *Candida spp*.

4. Report from the Biosafety Officer on the new Biosafety and Biosecurity course for graduate students.

Appendix C contains a brief description of the course and the summary of an introductory questionnaire.

5. Risk assessment forms for deliberate work with infectious agents and virus vectors.

Comments are sought on the format and content of the risk assessment Forms RA1 (for deliberate work with infectious agents), RA3 (for work with retroviruses and retrovirus vectors), RA5 (for work with poxviruses and poxvirus vectors) found in Appendices D, E and F respectively. In order to save paper the administrative arrangements at the beginning of the risk assessments has been removed from the hard copies circulated of RA3 and RA5 but can still be seen at the beginning of RA1.

6. Accident report

Several accidents with high risk agents have been reported from Germany and Austria. A verbal summary of these will be given along with reports of several accidents in HKU. One of the accidents involved an exploding cryovial and a proposed circular to remind liquid nitrogen users of the risk is included for comment as Appendix G.

7. International developments in Biosafety (for information)

- a) New Canadian biological safety legislation.
- b) European Committee on Standardization (CEN) workshop 53 “Project for the development of a Biosafety professional standard (December 17th and 18th 2009)”. The objective of the project is to define skills and tasks for the Biosafety professional and to develop a training curriculum. The product of the workshop will be a CEN Workshop Agreement (CWA), a document that is the result of consensus of the participant’s views.
- c) An open letter from the American Biosafety Association which refers to several high level reports in the USA on Biosafety as well as a summary of potential new legislation on weapons of mass destruction which includes biological agents.

Details of these developments are found in Appendix H a-c.

8. Technology report (for information)

As a follow on from an item presented at the last meeting on Synthetic Biology the paper "Synthetic recombinant bat SARS-like coronavirus is infectious in cultured cells and in mice" is included as Appendix I. It shows the power of advances in this area and illustrates the difficulties that arise in assessing the risk from particular agents.

9. Any other business

To consider any other business not otherwise on the agenda.