

REPORT OF THE VICE PRESIDENT PROF J MALCOLM HARRINGTON

INTRODUCTION

As ICOH approaches its centenary congress in Milan in 2006, it is gratifying to note that the Commission is active in 35 Scientific Committees and, since Singapore, in 3 networks.

What follows in this report is a summary of the activities of the Scientific Committees concentrating on future plans, collaborative activities and key publications. Each Committee's activity is briefly outlined and the collaboration with others is noted in **BOLD** to aid the reader in the cross referencing between reports. At the time of going to press, a few committees have yet to report to me.

The networks have been very active and because of their importance in cross fertilisation, I have appended their reports to me **in toto**.

The mid term meeting in Rome in 2002 was the prime opportunity for the officers of these Committees and Networks to meet and to promote new initiatives. My commentary on the Rome conference is also appended. Summarising this excellent meeting it was clear that there were 3 key growth areas for collaboration and 10 key topics.

These were:

KEY GROWTH AREAS

Asthma
Inequity
Unemployment (underemployment)

KEY TOPICS

Accidents
Aging
AIDS
Child Labour
Chemicals - Allergy
Cancer
Migrants
Musculo Skeletal Disorders
Stress
Work Organisation
Working Time

The theme of the Iguassu Congress is INEQUITY and it is to be hoped that all keys topics will receive a major boost in networking and enthusiasm from our members and that the real strength of ICOH – its Scientific Committees and Networks – will be further strengthened for the triennium leading to the centenary.

ACCIDENT PREVENTION (SCOAP)

A highly active committee with major conferences during the triennium. SCOAP represented ICOH at the ILO to discuss child labour. Collaborations include involvement with the IEA, Shift Work, Epidemiology and SCOHDEV. The Committee has produced a book “Guide to Evaluating the Effectiveness of Strategies for Preventing Work Injuries”.

AGING & WORK

Active involvement in a number of conferences including NIVA Seminar, Nordic Ergonomic Society, Conference on Occupational Health & Public Health. Two edited proceedings have been published of conferences in Denmark and The Netherlands. 4th international conference on Aging & Work in Poland June 2002.

AGRICULTURAL HEALTH

Collaborative activities planned with Organic Dust. Two position papers (Health Promotion for Danish Farmers & Education of Agricultural Occupational Health Professionals. A textbook on Agricultural Medicine for Health Care Professionals is at the planning stage.

ALLERGY & IMMUNOTOXICOLOGY

AIDS & Employment is a major current issue. A special issue of the “The Science of the Total Environment” was devoted to selected papers from the 1999 International Symposium on Occupational & Environmental Allergy & Immune Diseases. A position paper on Life Style & cell mediated natural immunity is in a late stage of planning.

CARDIOLOGY IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Collaborative activities planned with Psychosocial Factors as well as involvement in the 3rd international conference on work environment & cardiovascular diseases, Germany, 2002. The committee initiated the publication of “The workplace and cardiovascular disease” in the Hanley Belfus State of the Art Review series 2000.

EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Involvement in Max Lum’s conference on Best Practices and Occupational Safety & Health Education, Training & Communication: Ideas that Sizzle, Baltimore 2002. Also active ongoing with EASOM & FOHNEV.

EPIDEMIOLOGY IN OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH

Annual conference planned through to 2007. Joint conference planned with SCOHDEV concerning child labour, the informal sectors (methodology). “Blended” seminars planned with regional and sub specialist groups such as a conference in Barcelona in 2002.

FIBRES

Involvement in meeting of experts on safety in the use of insulation works ILO 2002 and the development of a code of practice in the use of synthetic vitreous fibre insulation work.

HANDICAP & WORK

No report to date

HEALTH SERVICES RESEARCH & EVALUATION

The Committee is involved in health services research with a particular interest in quality, organisation and structure and evidence based medicine in occupational health. A book “Evaluation in Occupational Health” has been published and many committee members are actively involved in the WHO – Europe book on “Good Occupational Health Practice”.

HISTORY OF PREVENTION OF OCC & ENVIRONMENTAL DISEASES

This new committee has formed a valuable collaboration with Public Health historians. A book of proceedings from the 2nd conference has been published and a further book on “Origins of Occupational Health Associates” is nearing completion.

INDOOR AIR QUALITY & HEALTH

Immune and Neurological Effects of Work & Environment (INEWE) Conference in China 2002 planned with Allergy & Immunotoxicology, Occupational & Environmental Dermatoses, Respiratory Diseases, Pesticides and Work & Vision.

INDUSTRIAL HYGIENE

X2001 Exposure Assessment in Epidemiology & Practice Sweden 2001 organised with NIWL. Key papers to be published in Scand J Work Environ Health. Involvement with

IOHA Conference Bergen, 2002 and Exposure Assessment conference in the Netherlands in 2004.

MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS

Very active group involved in collaborative PREMUS Conference – a fifth planned for Switzerland in 2004. Close involvement with IEA.

NEUROTOXICITY & PSYCHOPHYSIOLOGY

Close collaboration with the International Neurotoxicity Association including involvement in the Neurobehavioural Methods Symposium (9th -2005). An excellent newsletter is published regularly.

OCCUPATIONAL & ENVIRONMENTAL DERMATOSES

Close collaborative activities with INEWE conference China 2002 and 1st world congress on Work Related and Environmental Allergy – Finland 2003.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH & DEVELOPMENT (SCOHDEV)

Co hosting international conference on accident prevention with SCOAP in Morocco 2002. “OSH & Development” papers published 2001 and 2002.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH FOR HEALTH CARE WORKERS

“Occupational Health for Health Care Workers – a practical guide” published in 1999 along with involvement in the 2002 5th International Conference in Tunis.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH NURSING

There will be collaboration with the South Africa OHN conference and workshop in South Africa during November 2002.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN THE CHEMICAL INDUSTRY (MEDICHEM)

This important Scientific Committee has annual conferences planned through to 2005. Actively collaborating with **American Academy of Clinicians, Toxicology, American Industrial Hygiene Association, Society of Toxicology** and American College of Occupational Environmental Medicine. Position papers in planning stage.

OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH IN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

Involvement in the NIVA 2002 Course. Discussions in progress with **Respiratory Disorders**. Taking an active lead in asbestos screening issues and for active information exchange with EU/OSHA in Bilbao.

OCCUPATIONAL TOXICOLOGY

6th international conference on Biological Monitoring 2004. Collaboration with **Pesticides** on 5th conference and future plans for work with **Neurotox./Psycho-physiology, Allergy & Immunotoxicology and Toxicology of Metals**.

ORGANIC DUSTS

“Newsletter on Organic Dusts” distributed to 400 persons in 39 countries. Initiated the 4th Skokloster workshop on organic dusts. Preparing state of the art paper on disease among waste collectors and planning a workshop on humid buildings in Sweden in 2002.

PESTICIDES

Involved in the revision of “The Health Surveillance of Pesticide Workers. Manual for Occupational Health Professionals”. A position paper and book are planned on Pesticide Risk Analysis with ILO and WHO. Close collaboration with ICPS and involved with Agriculture, organic dusts and International Congress on Toxicology.

RADIATION & WORK

A collaborative meeting with Engineering and Physical Sciences in Medicine Conference for New Zealand in 2002 replaces the Waipuna Conference which was cancelled after September 11th. The Committee has reorganised following the tragically premature death of Ulf Berqvist.

REPRODUCTIVE HAZARDS

Close involvement in International Workshops in Rome 2000, San Marino 2001 and Venice 2001. Plans with **Toxicology of Metals and Immunotoxicology** for meeting in 2002/3.

RESPIRATORY DISORDERS

Involvement in INEWE Conference (China), Asbestos Symposium Japan 2002 and Workshop on Occupational Lung Disease Korea 2002. Newsletter “Pneusletter” in 8th edition. Key members of Committee have written sections of the WHO Textbook on Occupational Health. Involvement in the ICOH Task Force on Tobacco Free Workplaces.

SHIFT WORK

This influential Scientific Committee in planning its Seventeenth International Symposium on Night & Shift Work for Netherlands 2005. 14th and 15th symposium proceedings now published. Establishment of the “Working” Time Society”. Collaborative activities planned with **Aging & Work**.

SMALL SCALE ENTERPRISES & THE INFORMAL SECTOR

Meetings undertaken in collaboration with Perth (2000), Asian Association of Occupational Health (2000), Taiwan (2001). A chapter in WHO Textbook of Occupational Health in preparation.

THERMAL FACTORS

Involvement in ICEE Meeting, Japan 2002 and Sweden 2005 and Circumpolar Health conference Greenland 2005.

TOXICOLOGY OF METALS

Proceedings of 3rd international meeting on Metal Toxicity and Carcinogenicity has been published in Environmental Health Perspectives. Working on collaborative ventures with **Aging, Shift Work, Toxicity of Metals** Renewed interest in mercury and arsenic. Concerned about child labour and IT recycling (gallium and indium arsenide compounds).

UNEMPLOYMENT & HEALTH

Involved in numerous collaborative ventures, this Scientific Committee was an important forum for multiple Scientific Committee activity at the Mid Term Meeting in Rome (see commentary in this report). Remarkable resonance across the spectrum at Rome for their new and active Scientific Committee.

VIBRATION & NOISE

No report to date. Scientific Committee in major overhaul of its structure and function.

WORK & VISION

Individual members very active in a wide range of conferences. The recognition of Ergophthalmology as an important sub speciality of occupational health is an active aim. Position paper produced and submitted for publication in Occupational and Environmental Medicine.

WORK ORGANISATION & PSYCHO SOCIAL FACTORS

Work organisation is becoming a major feature of occupational health activity and is of increasing importance. Working with European Academy of Occupational Health. Psychology – and following the Mid Term Meeting – with other Scientific Committees – see Mid Term commentary.

Report of ICOH Network: Occupational Health Education in Developing Countries

Richard Ennals
Centre for Working Life Research
Kingston University, UK
7th February 2002

Background

The network was formed following an initiative from the South African Department of Health, at the Pan-African Conference on Occupational Health in Tunis in 1999. It was formally established by ICOH 2000 in Singapore, with anglophone and francophone discussions.

The idea was that the network should not simply talk, but concentrate on action, using the expertise of ICOH members as the key resource. It was recommended that a start should be made in Southern Africa, with the intention of developing further practical initiatives in developing countries in other continents.

The original emphasis was to be on practical pilot project work with a diploma course occupational health nurses in South Africa, supported by ICOH members, in particular from Sweden. The first year of the course was completed successfully in 2001, and reported by Dr Geoffrey Setswe. Following the success of the first year, funds have been secured for continued course delivery and development.

ICOH members supported workshops in the SADC region on occupational health, in association with WHO Afro, and succeeded in raising the profile of occupational health, although it is still not regarded as a top priority. Gopolang Sekobe has reported on recent policy declarations by SADC.

ICOH members have worked with colleagues in the Nelson R Mandela School of Medicine at the University of Natal in Durban, and with the South African Department of Health, to develop new integrated diploma courses in public health for health professionals, and there has been valuable progress reported.

WHO remains committed to the improvement of occupational health, but lacks funds, and has largely adopted other strategies. Thus WHO Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health often lack funding, though they derive some prestige from association with WHO and use of the logo.

Healthy work is an integral part of the new ILO Global Employment Agenda, in which they are seeking to form new global alliances, including NGOs and UN agencies, seeking to raise

standards of decent work. The new Strategy is under development, to be agreed at the ILO Congress in 2002, and launched at the UN Summit in Johannesburg in September 2002.

Current Work

Considerable efforts have been made to develop practical activities, and the work in South Africa, which achieved so much in 2001, continues in 2002. We should also report on some initiatives which to date have not brought results, although the work has been reported (e.g. in IJOEH and IJOSE in 2001).

Attempts were made to secure further funding for the francophone FORST project, after the end of initial funding from France and Canada. Discussions with WHO failed to lead to the desired results.

It was hoped to link the work on occupational health education in developing countries with the use of digital satellite radio, which would support both audio broadcasts and data transmission. Based on feasibility studies conducted from Kingston Business School, discussions were held with Maurice Mars of the Nelson Mandela School of Medicine in Durban, the South African Department of Health, an interested company Worldspace, the inventor of the clockwork radio Trevor Baylis, and with the UK Department For International Development. The concept seems technically feasible and could offer both a solution to data transmission bottlenecks and a means of reaching poor rural residents, but to date finance has not been forthcoming.

A symposium was held in Geneva with World Strategic Partners, on Business and Mental Energy at Work, seeking to develop new practical projects with new models of business, taking the work outlined above as an example. To date this has not led to practical results.

Future Prospects

New attention is being given to problems of developing countries, in light of increased awareness of global inequities, and the threats posed to global security, since 11th September. On that date WHO Europe debated “Poverty and Health”, and in my speech on behalf of ICOH I emphasised the importance of occupational health in terms of both health and economic development.

Understanding is increasing that conventional models of business and accounting do not give regard to key issues of pain and knowledge. There is growing awareness of the costs of unhealthy work, but a lack of experience in quantifying and dealing with the problem with the priority it deserves.

ICOH 2003 has the theme “The Challenge of Equity in Occupational Health and Safety”, and a task of the network for occupational health education in developing countries should be to point to practical low-cost examples of how the involvement of ICOH expertise can make a difference, with the capacity for scaling up into significant sustainable programmes if the imagination of world leaders is caught. ILO are happy to involve ICOH in a global alliance as part of the Global Strategy on Employment, to be launched at the UN Summit in September 2002.

I do not come from a specialist background in occupational health, but from the worlds of NGOs, education and political campaigning. I argued at ICOH 2000 in Singapore that the time is right for ICOH to rise to the challenge, and become an active international NGO. There are clear problems: ICOH has no money; the members are largely senior professionals accustomed to membership of a conventional passive organisation, with a few conferences, but little action and few publications for a wider audience. Enthusiasts have to find the means

to support their work, and in countries such as the UK universities are being run down and government programmes are little more than slogans.

For change to occur, it is a start to have a network of committed professionals in contact. However, what is also needed is a set of development coalitions, engaged in collaborative action on particular defined projects. In this first phase of the ICOH network for occupational health education in developing countries, we have seen the benefits of a concerted development coalition, and the relative weakness of a more general network.

In the case of the UK, our Prime Minister is currently in Africa, seeing the needs for himself in a number of developing countries. There is considerable expertise in the UK among willing professionals, for example meeting through the National Occupational Health Forum, chaired by ICOH Vice-President Malcolm Harrington. Senior occupational health professionals are advising governments, and pointing to what can be done. Finance ministers remain reluctant to commit to expenditure.

The challenge in 2002 is to place occupational health, or healthy work, on the world agenda, with a priority status and an assigned budget. We know from experience that research is not enough: decision makers do not read research publications. It is a matter of adopting a campaigning strategy, and capturing the attention of world leaders. The ingredients are there: ICOH has perspectives on headline issues such as HIV/AIDS, stress, asbestos, child labour.

I conclude that the ICOH network on occupational health education in developing countries has shown the feasibility of a successful campaign, based on working pilot projects, forceful argument, and the mobilisation of ICOH members. Converting feasibility into practical reality is the next stage, and the schedule is tight. Progress is needed before Iguassu Falls in 2003, if there is to be serious momentum. It can be done, but it will require both commitment and culture change in ICOH.

Mid-term Report of the Communications Network (ICOM-NET) of the International Commission on Occupational Health March, 2002

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Background

The formal announcement of the establishment of the international communications network was announced by the President of ICOH, Professor Bengt Knave in his presidential address at the ICOH 2000 Congress in Singapore. The official name of the network is the International Communications Network (ICOM.-NET). Since that meeting the Network has been very active and has completed some of its initial goals and made significant accomplishments on other key priorities

Core Goals of the Network and Accomplishments

Goal 01: To stimulate exchange of information about applied communication research, field work, and effective information technology application

On November 2, 2000 the Network participated in organizing an International Symposium on Health Risk Communication held on the campus of the National Institutes of Health. At that meeting a core group of leaders were identified to provide guidance and leadership to the ICOM- Network.

The Network leadership assisted ICOH in the development of the Conference on Occupational Health and Public Health held in Norrkoping September 6-9, 2001. The Network served on the organizing committee and supported over 10 separate presentations concerned with applied communications and communications technology. The network is working with its members to submit their final presentations to conference leadership for publication.

Goal 02: To create a connecting point for professionals managing or conducting communication activities and research

ICOM-NET in collaboration with the ICOH Education and Training scientific committee is organizing an International conference, October 26-30, 2002 in Baltimore Maryland. The conference is entitled Education, Training and Communication in Occupational Safety and Health, Ideas that Sizzle. 300-400 participants are expected. A conference brochure will be distributed at the mid-year executive committee meeting and member organizations will be encouraged to participate. Sponsorship for this meeting is expected from NIOSH as well as other federal and private institutions. This will be the largest ICOH meeting held in the United States in many years and will be used to strengthen the network. Themes of the meeting include the following:

*Risk communication and grieving communities
Explaining scientific data to the lay public
Curricula
Evaluation of teaching/learning strategies
Bioterrorism issues in the workplace
Risk assessment
Risk communication
Hazardous substance exposure
Workplace violence
Traumatic injuries Health promotion
Bloodborne/airborne pathogens
Noise-induced hearing loss*

Goal 03: To identify communication strategies to assist increased worker access to electronic technologies and identify useful practical information for health professionals, workers and employers.

ICOM-NET in cooperation with the Johns Hopkins University School of Public Health and the University of North Carolina Nursing School is organizing an intensive one-day continuing educational seminar on October 26 in Baltimore, Maryland, one day prior to its larger International meeting, that will focus on the important issue of "Crisis Communication"

The session will bring together a range of top educational experts, emergency response workers, and public employers and researchers. Special topic areas include the following:

*Working with the media
Guidance on dealing with safety and health facts and information
Guidance on working within space and time Constraints
Acknowledging Uncertainty
Understanding the public perceptions of risk*

Building support from colleagues and other spokespersons

We are hopeful that representatives of all ICOH working committees will attend this important training session and contribute their unique insights and perspectives.

ICOM-NET will prepare educational materials including workplace case study materials that will identify best practices and highlight key concepts of crisis communication. A brochure summarizing best practices in crisis communication is anticipated. Wide dissemination of this document will be planned for the ICOH Congress in 2003.

Goal04: To cooperate with other national, international organizations and institutions concerned about workplace safety and health and enthusiastically collaborate with ICOH work groups interested in addressing occupational safety and health communication issues,

ICOM-NET is cooperating with the ICOH Training and Educational Work Group and ICOH leadership is sponsoring the Baltimore Best Practices Conference in October 2002.

ICOM-NET by invitation will be participating in the EUROTOX 2002 Symposium in Budapest in September 2002. The focus of our activity and presentation will be better utilization of electronic media for delivering key health and safety information to workers, health professionals and employers.

ICOM-NET by invitation will be participating as guest of the Health Department of the French Ministry of Labor and Solidarity in an international symposium in Paris March 21-22, 2002 focused on the public perception of risk, decision making and public health safety.

In response to ICOH leadership the Network has prepared a general updated information brochure for the organization. Draft copies will be circulated for comment and critique at the mid-year executive committee meeting

In response to ICOH leadership the Network has prepared an updated information brochure that addresses ICOH accomplishments. Draft copies will be circulated for comment and critique at the mid-year executive committee meeting. To make this document truly effective Work Group members should consider identifying their three most important accomplishments

Challenges for 2002

Produce a summary of the Baltimore Best Practice conference and widely disseminate the results before and during the ICOH Congress in 2003.

Establish an electronic newsletter for all ICOH members that would focus on the special communications issues

Develop and circulated a small brochure highlighting case studies and recommendations concerning workplace crisis communication issues

Complete the accomplishments and general brochure and submit to ICOH for printing.

**Report from ICOH International Network on Women, Work and Health
by Elisabeth Lagerlöf, Head of information and Communication European Foundation
for the Improvement of Living and Working Conditions, Dublin**

Since the network on Women, Work and Health was started at the ICOH Congress in Singapore year 2000, the contacts and exchange have so-far mostly been done via email within the network.

III Conference on Women, Work and Health

The first possibility to meet at a bigger event will be at the Third International Conference on Women, Work and Health to be held in Stockholm June 2-5, 2002. More than 600 participants are expected and the organisers have received a high number of proposals for mini symposia and abstracts from all over the world.

Increased visibility of women's work and health

The visibility of women's work and health questions has increased considerably all over the world. At EU level, both the Swedish and the Belgian EU presidencies have highlighted these problems in their official programmes, and a number of initiatives have been taken by other EU organisations as the Social Partners at EU level. The European Agency for Safety and Work at Health held a special workshop during the concluding conference on the European Work Environment Week about gender, accidents and risk assessment. In their work programme for 2002 the gender questions will be on the agenda for the first time, where they will start to collect and review existing information on women's health and safety. This will result in a report and weblink to relevant literature on their website www.osha.eu.int to key sources of information. Furthermore, fact sheets will be developed on women and occupational safety and health, which will be translated to all Member States languages.

The *European Foundation for the Improvement for Working and Living Conditions* has carried out its Third European Survey on Working Conditions, where a special in-depth report on women's working conditions in the Member States has been produced. In addition, the survey has been enlarged to all the Candidate Countries (former Eastern Europe), so it will be possible to provide comparable data for women's working conditions for the majority of European countries. These data will be presented at the Third International Congress on Women, Work and Health in June. A monitoring tool for following Quality of Life in Europe is under development, which will also provide comprehensive data for women in Europe. Work is also continuing in finding gender-sensitive indicators for quality of work, which enables the reconciliation of work and family life.

In addition the Foundation will in May present its first Foundation paper on Women and Employment. The objective of a Foundation Paper series is to make past, present and future work of the Foundation on equal opportunities between women and men relevant and accessible in a concise format. The subject of the paper will be linked to current social policy issues to provide a timely contribution to the debate at European level.

ETUC, the European Trade Union Congress has also started a big project on gender in health and safety looking at research, risk assessment, etc, which will soon be published. This initiative has also been followed by national trade union initiative. TUC in England has for instance produced a report on safety and health for the ageing women.

On international level, both WHO and ILO have continued their important work on women, work and health. In Canada, has for instance the University – union programme on women's occupational health (CINBIOSE) in Quebec continued their important work and in the US the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) has an expanding research program to address the occupational safety and health needs of working women. Their research covers now women's issues in musculo-skeletal disorder, job stress, reproductive hazards, violence in the Workplace, Women in non-traditional employment, Cancer, and Health Care Workers.

Finally, the network will pay a large tribute of gratitude to all ICOH sub committees who has helped to increase the visibility of this subject by bringing it up on their agenda. Many conferences have had special session women's occupational health.

ICOH MID TERM MEETING, ROME, MARCH 2/3 2002

Commentary by Malcolm Harrington

Introduction

This was a very successful meeting in that it brought people together who wish to collaborate on broader issues than their own committee. Much was promised and the first point of reference for delivery will be the 2003 Congress in Brazil.

In all, 29 of the 35 committees were represented, and reports were produced for the mid term working papers by 33 committees. Two of the networks were represented and the third delivered a report shortly after the conclusion of the meeting. Twelve of the committees gave oral evidence with the themes of collaborative &/or innovative ventures. For those committees not represented, force majeure best sums up their absence-illness, lack of finance, leadership in flux and, in one case, a mix up over the dates!

Collaboration with other S/C's

All the presentations highlighted formal or informal links with at least one other S/C. In some cases this was 3 or 4. (Accidents, Allergy, Immunotox., Unemployment are good examples). The S/C's with "toxicology" in their name-+ Medicem-are active separately and in concert where relevant. The 3 S/C's involved with inhaled particles likewise are in collaboration with Allergy. Some S/C's not presenting also had cross S/C activities planned.

Position papers, journals , books.

Most committees are working on such projects -usually with others-Accidents, Epi, Neurotox, Respiratory, Metals, Work and Vision- to name but a few.

Collaboration with other organisations

Some of the committees are the major player for the subject in the world - e.g. Shiftwork. Others such as Neurotox are a major player but collaborate with the few others to match them. Ergonomics Musculo-Skeletal & Ind. Hyg. have close relationships with the international associations in their subject and History has close links with Public Health historians. Accidents likewise collaborate widely. OH & Dev. uniquely has regional activities to highlight the differing needs for OH support around the world.

Communication is key to success in the global strategies and links with the ILO, WHO, and ISSA are encouraging. Ed. & Training has an important role to play here as well. The Networks have been exemplary here.

Work Organisation is leading the way in bringing this area to a more central focus for OH professionals.

Cyclical Activity

This theme was highlighted by the Tox, presentation but was taken up by others. Fashions change and hazards/risks wax and wane. Many S/C's are actively leading research in these fields and are keeping up with-or are ahead- of the trends.

By the same token, some committees are going through difficult times-usually due to the need to provide consistently strong leadership. Those currently in “the doldrums” gave evidence of a resurgence in the near future. No S/C was moribund and the general consensus was to maintain all and to use collaborative activity where lean patches occur- as they inevitably do from time to time.

Key growth issues

Several emerged during the meeting that engendered great enthusiasm from all present. They were :

ASTHMA
INEQUITY
UNEMPLOYMENT

Rather than create an asthma S/C, the relevant existent S/C’s plan to combine to address this area of growing concern and importance. Inequity is the theme for Iguassu and most of those present saw some resonance with this subject within their own area of expertise. The discussion following the presentation by the Unemployment S/C provoked great interest in future collaboration and several key members of at least 4 S/C’s were seen in a huddle immediately afterwards!

A personal note

This final huddle after the last presentation of the meeting provided me with the greatest hope for the S/C system. An issue of great moment in the world of OH brought together world leaders in separate fields as they saw an opportunity to prove the adage that the whole is greater than the sum of the parts.

That is what ICOH is about. It succeeds or fails as an NGO on the basis of bringing together the great and the good of this multidisciplinary subject of OH and making something happen for the good of the working population. The active nature of the 3 Networks epitomizes their role in facilitating such collaboration.

The mid –term meeting must never be a “one off”, but it can-and should- act as a stimulus to renewed effort It must mean progress and Iguassu is the first stage of this new resolve. It, too, stands or falls on the basis of the vigour of the S/C’s.