

2003-06-11  
Gunborg Jungeteg

**Short notes at the ICOH Scientific Committee/Network Officers' meeting February 22, 2003 in Hotel Mabu, Room B, Iguassu, Brazil**

**Participants:**

(SC = Scientific Committee, OH = Occupational Health , OSH = Occupational Safety and Health

Stephen W. Borron, SC on OH in the Chemical Industry  
Antonio Grieco, SC History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases  
Daniela Fano, SC History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases  
Katherine M. Venables, SC Epidemiology in OH  
Sergio Iavicoli, SC History of Prevention of Occupational and Environmental Diseases  
Kaj Elgstrand, SC OH and Development  
Max Lum, Network Information and Communication Technology in OH  
Roberto Lucchini, SC Neurotoxicology and Psychophysiology  
Jean-François Caillard, Past President  
Bengt Knave, President  
Ruddy Facci, Vice President  
Daisy Raja Gabaglia, PA to Vice President  
Virginia Lepping, SC OH in Nursing  
Jenny Serfontein, SC OH in Nursing  
Ken Parsons, SC Thermal Factors  
Gunnar Nordberg, SC Toxicology of Metals  
Håkan Westberg, SC Industrial Hygiene  
Annette Jørgensen, SC OH in Nursing  
Kaj Husman, SC Health Services Research and Evaluation in OH  
Giuseppe Abbritti, SC Indoor Air Quality and Health  
Giacomo Muzi, SC Indoor Air Quality and Health  
Piet Kroon, SC Education and Training in OH  
Ken Takahashi, SC Respiratory Disorders  
Laura Punnett, SC Musculoskeletal Disorders  
Jyrki Liesivuori, SC Pesticides  
Jorma Rantanen, President-elect  
Representative of SC Allergy and Immunotoxicology  
Gunborg Jungeteg, PA to the President

**1. Opening of the meeting**

Bengt Knave opened the meeting and asked the participants to introduce themselves.

**2. ICOH Scientific Committees' and Networks' report for 2000-2002**

The Triennium Report including the reports of the Scientific Committees and the Networks was briefly commented by the President. He asked the participants to deliver comments to him when they had studied the content.

**3. Scientific Committees' issues of special interest for ICOH's global role as OSH expertise**

Selected SC Officers had been asked to present their views on the following questions:

- A) Should the number of SCs and Networks be decreased?
- B) Can some SCs/Networks be amalgamated?
- C) Are there new areas to be covered?
- D) ICOH Officers' coordinating role?

Jenny Serfontein, Antonio Grieco and Kaj Elgstrand had accepted to comment the above questions.

**Jenny Serfontein:**

A) and B) There are some SCs active in similar fields, like the toxicology committees and the committees on unemployment, shiftwork and work organisation.

The area of HIV/Aids needs to be covered by a committee or network.

**Kaj Elgstrand:**

A) 38 committees and networks for about 2000 ICOH members mean an average of 50 members per committee/network, if all members participate in one committee/network each. This does not seem as too many committees and networks.

It is however surprising that only six of the SCs have their own websites, accessible through the ICOH website. To be able to access all SCs/Networks is of crucial importance to make the whole membership interested in the activities of the SCs/Networks.

B) and C) Some SCs/Networks could probably be amalgamated considering logical reasons related to the subject contents of their activities and/or the small number of persons active in some SCs/Networks. These two indicators – contents overlapping and number of active members – may, on the other hand, be less relevant than the level of activities and the quality of these activities within the different SCs/Networks.

I miss one subject - HIV/Aids in working life, and maybe also – Health effects of globalisation.

D) In spite of definite efforts made by the officers of ICOH, the impression is that the coordination has mainly consisted in attempts to get formal reports from the SCs/Networks. It seems fine that there are both SCs, Networks and Task Groups. It would be a good measure to amplify the coordinating role by including a more active follow-up of the activities in these groups. Why not limit the ICOH Officers' role to coordinate, support and follow-up of the work in the Task Groups, and let each Board member be responsible for coordination and follow-up of the activities in two SCs/Networks each? Such an organisation would provide increased support to the SCs/Networks and a basis for amalgamation of some groups and establishment of new ones.

**Antonio Grieco:**

A) The opinions on a relevant number of ICOH SCs and Networks are varying and sometimes not in agreement.

B) Those in favour of a large number of ICOH SC emphasize the fact that in the last year the number of problems demanding new knowledge has increased enormously. I think that everyone would agree on having:

- a) appropriate periodical checks on their (not only scientific) productivity and
- b) a real implementation of the aggregation into seven areas, as suggested at the ICOH 2000 in Singapore also in view of strengthening the weaker SCs and developing affinities.

C) New areas to be covered could be:

- a) Diagnostic criteria for work-related diseases
- b) Migration

D) the ICOH Officers' coordinating role is substantial in order to

- Monitor and stimulate ICOH SC and Network activities;
- Increase ICOH SC and Network communication, socialization and proselytism;
- Prepare and upload on the web an annual report of developed activities;
- Stimulate and foster collaboration between ICOH SCs and other bodies.

Bengt Knave thanked the three presenters for their valuable views on the questions posed.

On these presentations a lively discussion followed.

Bruno Piccoli: Consensus position papers are important products for the SCs. The SC on Work and Vision had difficulties to publish a position paper due to lack of referees. It will now be possible in the Ergonomics publication.

Gunnar Nordberg:

Re. Amalgamation of SCs. When a new SC in the field of toxicology is proposed, it has been decided that all toxicology SCs shall cooperate. Such an attitude ought to be more emphasized. If a SC is not active, it should be closed. It is very important that our SCs are seen publicly, especially on the website. Do not in the first case amalgamate or close!

Roberto Lucchini:

We want good SCs with active members. The ICOH Officers and Board could demand more from the SCs, so that the inactive ones could be sorted out. Networking is good.

Stephen Borron:

We need more communication between the SCs regarding conferences and meetings. There are often undesirable collisions between interesting meetings. A well up-dated calendar on the ICOH website would be appreciated.

Giacomo Muzi:

Our SC on Indoor Air Quality and Health is networking very well with other SCs. We had a good conference in China for example. A question is if we shall produce position papers that will not be published!

Bengt Knave commented on the presentations and the discussion:

Kaj Elgstrand's comments are important. The ICOH Board members could be more active towards the SCs. The President-elect and the Secretary-General-elect are listening. I myself have proposed networks for new topics, as not every interesting area is scientific.

We have tried to have an ICOH journal or be part of an existing suitable journal without success. If the membership fee should be increased, one of the demands is that it should cover

an ICOH journal. This is a matter for the next group of ICOH Officers and the next ICOH Board.

A new ICOH Network has been established – GOMECE (Guidelines on Occupational Medicine Education and Competence) led by Ragnar Rylander.

Bengt Knave asked for comments by the President-elect.

Jorma Rantanen:

I must discuss these issues with the new ICOH Board. My opinion is that we shall not increase the number of areas but be really active in the ones already covered. We ought to improve the quality and produce effective products. The global view is important.

Sergio Iavicoli:

ICOH has limited resources but we shall work efficiently with them. Active communication between SCs, Networks and members would be of valuable support in this work as well as increase the number of members.

### **Comments on the result of the ICOH five-year Programme Strategy with special impact on the activities of the ICOH SCs**

Bengt Knave presented in summary the work of the ICOH Task Groups and ICOH Networks during the past triennium. All reports have been published on the ICOH Website.

#### TG Transparency:

A form for Declaration of Interest was presented in Singapore 2000 that was proposed to be completed by ICOH executives on all levels. This form will be presented to the General Assembly in Iguassu for approval and will come into effect for the triennium 2003-2005.

The proposal of changes to the Constitution and Bye-laws was commented by some of the SC Officers. The danger of conflicts of interest when associated experts are allowed to be active in SCs was emphasized. It was however found necessary to revise the ICOH Constitution and Bye-laws

#### ICOH Code of Ethics:

The revised text of the Code of Ethics is ready to be published on the ICOH Website. It will be printed in English, French and Spanish.

#### New SC or Network on HIV/Aids:

Max Lum declared that he is very interested in working with this topic, especially from the information point of view.

At the same time it was suggested that the name of the Network on Information and Communication Technology ought to be changed to Communication Network.

The proposal of the Task Group on Language Matters was also commented. Annette Jörgensen, chair of the TG Language Matter, explained that if more languages should be defined as ICOH official languages the translation work must be done free of charge by ICOH members.

### ICOH membership fees:

The Task Group has suggested substantially reduced fee for members from developing countries. Jenny Serfontein asked if it was also possible for such member to pay the fee once a year. As the handling of membership fees by the Banks is expensive it is not likely, but the procedure should be investigated by the Secretary-General.

### **ICOH Website**

The Web-master Bruno Hannemann reported that during the past two years there has been an average of 654 visitors per month. There have been altogether 15053 unique visitors over the past two years. Bruno Hannemann also reported that there are 766 links from the ICOH website and that 80% of the visitors reached the ICOH website by search engines from 100 countries.

Bengt Knave thanked Bruno for his good work.

### **Responsibilities for the ICOH Officers towards the ICOH SCs**

#### Financial support:

Bengt Knave explained that an amount of 2000 CHF was budgeted for each SC for the triennium 2000-2003. Very few SCs made use of this offer. Kate Venables suggested a "rolling fund" for the start-up of activities that would have the goal to be self-financed but needed financial resources at the beginning.

To the question if there is a special procedure to apply for financial support, Bengt Knave replied that the application should go to the Secretary-General for handling according to the rules set-up by the Finance Committee and the TG Transparency.

#### Promotion material and communciation:

Max Lum presented information on a seminar "New Era responding to New Threats" in which the SC on Education and Training in OSH and the Network on ICT cooperated. The material used for that seminar – a poster and a sticker with the text "Ask me about ICOH" – could be sent by Max Lum to those who were interested. The material can be sent by email.

In this connection Roberto Lucchini asked if it would be possible to exchange SC-material by email or via the website. Bruno Hannemann explained that he is rebuilding the ICOH website in order to facilitate the process of entering material.

It was also stressed that the ICOH National Secretaries and the ICOH SC Officers must be in close contact to be able to make an productive effort to increase the ICOH membership.

### **Next Mid-term meeting of the ICOH SCs/Networks Officers**

It was announced that the next Mid-term meeting will be held in Finland end of January 2005 in connection with the Occupational Health Service Conference.

#### Other announcements:

The next Exposure Assessment Conference will be held in Utrecht June 17-19 2004

The next Medichem Conference will be held in Paris September 1-4, 2004

Material from the Occupational Health in Nursing Conference in Port Elisabeth in 2002 is now published.

**Closing of the meeting**

Bengt Knave closed the meeting by expressing his gratitude to all SC Officers for their dedicated work during his time as Vice President responsible for the ICOH SCs and as President of ICOH, 1993 – 2002.