Report of WG on Occupational Infectious Agents

ICOH Mid-Term Meeting
February 8-10, 2014
Helsinki, Finland
Background

The WGOIA was established in 2003. This report covers the period April 2012 to December 2013 of the fourth triennium. A proposal that the WGOIA become a Scientific Committee of ICOH was considered at the ICOH Board meeting in March 2012. It was decided that the Working Group continue for a further triennium since there were already the maximum number of scientific committees; the President of ICOH, Dr Kazutaka Kogi, re-appointed Dr Mary Ross as Chair and Dr Kari Reijula as Secretary of the WGOIA for the triennium 2012-2015, and assigned the following tasks to the WGOIA:

1. Advise the Officers and the Board on matters related to occupational infectious agents;
2. Identify priority occupational infectious agents and groups of exposed workers to develop relevant guidelines and fact sheets to promote prevention and management of occupational infectious agents;
3. Provide and disseminate information and generate action on occupational infectious agents through participation in national and international occupational health events and media;
4. Liaise with relevant ICOH Scientific Committees regarding prevention of diseases by occupational infectious agents of common interest.

The mid-term meeting of the WGOIA was held in São Paulo as part of the WGOIA track of the ICOH Joint Conference of 3 Scientific Committees (Occupational Health for Health Care Workers; Occupational Health and Development; and Occupational Health Nursing) and the WGOIA in September 2013. The meeting, chaired by the secretary Ms Claudina Nogueira, was attended by 4 members and Dr Jorge Morales (President of the 30th ICOH Congress, 2012). The conference served to promote awareness of the outputs and the scope of the WGOIA among the participants and members of ICOH Scientific Committees. Regular communication and exchanges between members on the WGOIA activities and products have been maintained through electronic mail.

Strategy and Focus Areas of the Working Group on Occupational Infectious Agents

The strategy to implement the 2012-2015 workplan continues, namely to:

- Research what is already available in the selected focus areas;
- Collaborate with relevant ICOH Scientific Committees (SCs) and organisations to identify priority occupational infectious agents (OIAs) and to develop or select a range of educational materials based on best available evidence to protect workers from OIAs;
- Investigate how best to disseminate information, while allowing flexibility for country-specific fact sheets or guidelines; and
- Provide the Editor in Chief of the ICOH Newsletter with information on the activities of the WGOIA and developments or work group products in the field of occupational infectious agents.

The main occupational health approaches to each focus area are: "Fitness for work", "Risk assessment" and "Health surveillance". The following existing and new focus areas were identified by the WGOIA to achieve the tasks assigned by the President:
Activities of the Working Group on Occupational Infectious Agents

A number of focus areas and initiatives were identified and prioritised, with emphasis on prevention of exposure to OIAs, as well as prevention and management of infections in the workplace through "Fitness for work", "Risk assessment" and "Health surveillance". The WGOIA identified health care workers and occupational travellers as specific target groups; the global epidemics of HIV and tuberculosis as specific infections; and personal interests and experience of WGOIA members (e.g. occupational infections in miners) and collaborating SCs for research and prioritisation of further target groups and diseases. A model of output delivery and implementation was piloted through the South African Society for Occupational Medicine (SASOM), namely production of generic WGOIA documents for National Occupational Medicine bodies to develop country-based material.

Focus Area 1: Health Care Workers
- Following interaction with members of the SC on Health Care Workers, the WGOIA decided that the guidance document developed through the WGOIA be adapted (e.g. for developing countries with high burden HIV and tuberculosis) in conjunction with clinical microbiologists and formally referenced, instead of being a less formal workplace manual. Dr Porru presented the guidance document at the São Paulo ICOH conference and is currently updating and referencing the document which will be endorsed by the WGOIA and offered to members for use by National occupational medical associations. South African clinical microbiologists involved in health care worker protection are already engaged with Dr Porru to develop the South African version as a SASOM Guideline, which will be launched in 2014.

Focus Area 2: Occupational Travel Medicine
- The “10 Tips on Infections for Occupational Travellers” have been researched by Dr Ross and South African colleagues and a travellers’ bookmark was developed for occupational or travel medicine clinics to provide to occupational travellers. It was presented for discussion at a workshop at the São Paulo conference and was received with enthusiasm. A South African version has been endorsed by SASOM and launched at a national conference in November 2013.
- Dr Ross developed a chapter on occupational health for travellers for the South African Society for Travel Medicine’s guideline on travel medicine.
- As part of the WGOIA approach to increasing awareness, occupational topics and tracks are actively encouraged at travel medicine conferences and courses and vice versa by members, to promote dissemination of information on OIAs. Dr Ross gave a keynote address on ‘Travel into Africa – a Corporate Perspective’ at the South African Society for Travel Medicine international travel medicine conference in September 2012, and she obtained sponsorship for Professor Lucille Blumberg to deliver the keynote address ‘Infections, Occupations and Global Travel’ at the São Paulo ICOH conference in September 2013.

Focus Area 3: HIV and tuberculosis
- The WGOIA prepared a workplace policy on HIV for ICOH in the previous triennium. In keeping with the wider global focus on other infectious diseases and the global “Stop TB” programme, a combined HIV and tuberculosis management policy for occupational health services has been developed for a mining company in South Africa.

Focus Area 4: Priority Groups
- Members have been encouraged to select industries or workplaces of particular personal interest, and to liaise with relevant ICOH SCs or other organisations to develop tools, information sheets, or programmes that could target either particular groups or OIAs.
- The mining industry was selected as one such target since the burden of infectious diseases in miners was prioritised for inclusion in the first ICOH collaborative conference to be held in 2013. The presentation prepared by Dr Ross and delivered by Ms Nogueira at the São Paulo conference engendered much interest and resulted in a request for the WGOIA to organise a special session on aspects of mining at the ICOH conference in South Korea in 2015.
Other Activities

- Dr Ruddy Facci organised the midterm SC ICOH conference to include a WGOIA track.
- The WGOIA sought collaboration with a number of the SCs with varying success.
- Liaison has been maintained through Ms Claudina Nogueira with the WHO Collaborating Centres (CC) in Occupational Health (OH).
- Dr Claudio Taboadaela organised for the WGOIA to have a webpage on the website of the Sociedad de Medicina del Trabajo de la Provincia de Buenos Aires (SMTBA) at http://www.smtba.net/page/icoh-oia-wg. The abstracts from the São Paulo conference are being edited by Ms Claudina Nogueira and will be loaded on to the website with a link to the ICOH site.

Midterm Outputs of the Working Group on Occupational Infectious Agents

- A referenced, evidence-based guidance document on clinical best practices with regards to OIA and health care workers has been developed. This includes appendices on immunisation and management of the more common infectious agents.
- A fact sheet “10 Tips on Infections for Occupational Travellers”, was developed in the format of a traveller’s book mark. SASOM’s branded version was launched in November 2013.

Plans for 2014-2015

- Meetings will be held in conjunction with the ICOH Board meeting in February 2014 and at the African Regional Occupational Health Congress planned for June 2014 and electronic mail contact will be maintained between members working on projects of communal interest.
- Work related to the four focus areas will continue:
  - **Focus Area 1**: Information sheets on immunisation for health care workers will be developed from the WGOIA guidance document; the target group is occupational health personnel in health care settings. The SASOM Guideline based on this guidance document will be launched in mid-2014.
  - **Focus Area 2**: Fact sheets for occupational health care workers will be prepared to support the bookmarks and cover prevention and management of priority OIAs for business and expatriate travellers. Information on the bookmark will be provided to the Editor for the first 2014 ICOH newsletter.
  - **Focus Area 3**: An integrated HIV and tuberculosis management plan will be developed for occupational health personnel in high burden countries
  - **Focus Area 4**: The WGOIA will continue to seek liaison with the SCs that have indicated an intention to collaborate, e.g. SC Rural Health regarding joint activities on zoonoses, and encourage members to research specific groups of interest such as waste workers, miners.
- The WGOIA website will be populated and linked to the ICOH website to give members access to fact sheets, guidance documents and other products. The use of media in the public domain such as Wikipedia will be investigated.
- The WGOIA has agreed to co-ordinate and chair an oral topic session on OIA; a special session on tasks and deliverables from the WGOIA; an oral session on occupational travel medicine, and co-organise a special session on mining at ICOH2015 in Seoul, South Korea.
Membership

Following 2012, the secretary, Kari Reijula stepped down due to work commitments and Claudina Nogueira agreed to take over the position for the remainder of the triennium. Dr Jaspal (JP) Ahluwalia from the United States of America resigned due to professional commitments. The membership, as at December 2013, comprises 20 members from 12 countries:

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<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Country</th>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Ross</td>
<td>South Africa</td>
<td>(Chair)</td>
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<td>Kari Reijula</td>
<td>Finland</td>
<td>(Secretary for 2012)</td>
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<td>Mario Bonciani</td>
<td>Brazil</td>
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<td>José Carneiro</td>
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<td>Yun Kyung Chung</td>
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<td>Claudia de Hoyos</td>
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<td>Ruddy Facci</td>
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<td>Claudina Nogueira</td>
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<td>Robert Orford</td>
<td>United States of America</td>
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<td>Koji Wada</td>
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<td>Toru Yoshikawa</td>
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Presidential nominated member for Triennium 2012-2015

David Koh             Singapore