

ICOH Scientific Committee: reproductive hazards in the workplace

Work program 2009-20012

Introduction

The Scientific Committee on "Reproductive Hazards in the Workplace" was established in 1995 and chaired by professor Irene Figa-Talamanca and professor Alf Fischbein for more than a decade.

The objective of the committee is to encourage research into occupational and environmental risk to human reproductive health and to promote occupational preventive measures and work-place related health programmes to protect the fetus, child development and adult reproductive capability all over the world.

These goals are to be reached by promoting contact and interactions between scientists and practitioners in the field and by organising workshops, symposias and conferences. Whenever appropriate and feasible the Committee support expert reviews as basis for position papers and recommendations to stakeholders and the community at large.

The Committee elaborate guidelines on reproductive issues in occupational health, provide training programmes and contribute to development of sound and evidence based occupational health services and pay attention to high ethical standards in the field.

Updated broad position papers on occupational risk to reproductive health have been published December 2006 in *Occupational and Environmental Health* (1-4). These may serve as starting points when considering the need for more focused reviews in specific fields.

Work program for the period 2009-2012

I Organisational issues

1. Executive board.

The executive board of a limited number of researchers in the field is updated to assist the chair and secretary to review proposals, comment on new initiatives and support carrying out all activities. The board should be balanced with respect to participants from developing and developed countries.

2. Business meetings.

Business meetings are to be held in relation to all scientific meetings and as a minimum an agenda is issued well in advance of the meeting and minutes are distributed to members as well as the ICOH SC officers.

3. Website

Development and update of the SC reproductive Health website. This is to be given high priority and is an ongoing task that needs high attention.

4. Recruitment of members and mailing lists

Recruitment of new members of the Committee and update of the mailing list. Contacts to scientist currently working in the field all over the world to encourage signing up for ICOH and SC reproductive health (through personal contacts and scientific journals) and to encourage contributions to SC activities. This might be done in relation to announcements of ICOH SC-RH activities.

II Scientific issues

1. Work-shops and mini symposia

The Committee take responsibility for the organisation of seminars or minisymposia on reproductive health in relation to the EPICOH conference in in 2010 and 2011 and the ICOH congress in 2012.

2. The first stand-alone International Conference ICOH SC Reproductive Hazards.

The Committee aim at organising the first ICOH reproductive health international conference in or 2011 or 2012 with the objective to provide a broad review of all current issues in work related reproductive health issues and with the aim to gather together between 100 and 200 scientists in the field from all over the world. Such an event would enhance visibility and impact of the fields and help recruit new resources to the field.

4. Position paper.

Workshops and symposia on specific themes of current interest are organised to obtain critical and exhaustive reviews of current knowledge in specific fields and whenever feasible and appropriate extended abstracts and proceedings are aggregated and edited to become reviews with recommendations that may be published in peer-reviewed journals.

One position paper is to be written during the period on a topical issue of high practical relevance. Possible issues are

- a. Male mediated developmental toxicity (new findings on epigenetics)
- b. Endocrine disruption in the occupational arena (considering the fact that so far this topic has been entirely based upon environmental issues)
- c. Gene-environment interaction in reproductive health (an emerging field)
- d. The risk conferred by physical strain during pregnancy (where we still are lacking reliable answers)
- e. Reproductive hazards in developing countries (where hazards may be more important to combat than in developed countries)

5. Increase impact and visibility of research in the field by a web service highlighting important new results and indicating need for implementation.

Original high quality research results are necessary but must be accompanied by dissemination beyond the scientific community to get impact. ICOH SCs have a responsibility in this context. It is suggested to provide references to core papers that are published in a large number of scientific journals that it may be difficult to keep track with. A systematic search strategy will be needed to accomplish that. Most people have search strings in their own narrow fields. There may be a need for attention more broadly. This initiative will, however, call for quite some resources and is only feasible if it fits into domestic activities of the Committee members.

6. Initiatives with respect to occupational health guidelines, training, occupational health services and code of ethics in the field?

Elaboration of evidence-based guidelines describing good occupational practice in a field is highly needed for vulnerable groups as pregnant women and might be developed in collaboration with the new committee on women's health. Guidelines make part of the basis for describing training modules and material and the need for occupational health services. Such activities are considered important but are also labor intensive and such tasks can only realistically be solved if encompassed in domestic activities by the Committee members.

Jens Peter Bonde

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Reference List

- (1) Jensen TK, Bonde JP, Joffe M. The influence of occupational exposure on male reproductive function. *Occup Med (Lond)* 2006; 56(8):544-553.
- (2) Thulstrup AM, Bonde JP. Maternal occupational exposure and risk of specific birth defects. *Occup Med (Lond)* 2006; 56(8):532-543.
- (3) Burdorf A, Figa-Talamanca I, Jensen TK, Thulstrup AM. Effects of occupational exposure on the reproductive system: core evidence and practical implications. *Occup Med (Lond)* 2006; 56(8):516-520.
- (4) Figa-Talamanca I. Occupational risk factors and reproductive health of women. *Occup Med (Lond)* 2006; 56(8):521-531.