Network Virtual Meeting

A virtual meeting for Network focal points was convened 25-26 May 2021. Ongoing travel restrictions mean that the Network is reliant on online activities for interaction and information exchange, and periodic meetings with Network focal points are essential to keep participants informed and to guide the future direction of the Network. The virtual meeting in May was attended by focal points from more than 60 Network institutions. The meeting took the format of presentations and discussions in plenary plus breakout room discussions covering six topic areas. The discussions from this meeting are being used to plan future Network activities. The WHO Secretariat was assisted with arranging this virtual meeting by an organizing committee drawn from ten Network institutions. It is intended to convene another virtual meeting for Network focal points before the end of 2021.

Network Webinar Series

The series of webinars organized through the Network has continued during the first half of 2021, with webinars held on the topics of identifying emerging risks from chemicals and on the role of the IARC Monographs in identifying carcinogenic hazards to humans. Recordings and presentation slides are available to Network focal points via the Network SharePoint site. The recording of the Network webinar on Chemical Incident Response and Poison Centres has now been translated into French and Spanish to allow wider access. The recording of this webinar features sub-titles of the words spoken by the presenters translated into French or Spanish. The text on the slides and interactive poll results have similarly been translated. It is hoped that these webinar recordings with translation will be useful for Network institutions where French or Spanish are spoken. The French and Spanish recordings are available from the WHO Secretariat.
Network Funded Activities

In place of funding international travel to a Network meeting, the Network has provided small amounts of funds to support some local activities arranged by Network institutions. These have included seminars or webinars on the topics of risk assessment of chemicals in food (South Africa), human biomonitoring (Tunisia), pesticides (Costa Rica, Tunisia, Georgia) or poison centres (Bhutan). There have also been translations of WHO publications on chemicals into Russian, Amharic and Persian. It has been very rewarding to see Network institutions providing speakers for online events arranged by other institutions.

Latest Publications

Outbreak investigation manual
A manual has been published describing methods for investigating clusters or outbreaks of illness that may be of chemical origin. The manual provides a pragmatic guide for public health and allied professionals, covering a practical guide to investigating clusters and outbreaks, including some case studies, and the principles and concepts of investigation.
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240021754

Ethical principles in human biomonitoring
Network institutions have previously requested guidance on ethical principles to be applied to human biomonitoring studies. WHO has published a guidance document, in the context of research carried out in artisanal and small-scale gold mining (ASGM) settings, providing an overview of internationally agreed ethical and scientific principles that should be adhered to for human biomonitoring studies.
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240020702

e-Waste exposure and child health
This report summarizes the latest scientific knowledge on the links between informal e-waste recycling activities and health outcomes in children. As many as 18 million children and adolescents and 12.9 million women, including an unknown number of women of childbearing age, may be at risk from adverse health outcomes linked to e-waste recycling. The report is intended to increase awareness and knowledge among health professionals of the dangers that e-waste recycling poses to the health of future generations and is a call to action to reduce children’s exposure to harmful e-waste activities.
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240023901

Public health impact of chemicals
WHO has published the latest data addendum providing updated estimates of the burden of disease attributable to exposures to selected chemicals. The latest addendum presents data for the year 2019, and estimates that 2 million lives and 53 million disability-adjusted life years were lost in that year. These estimates of the burden of disease continue to be higher than previously published estimates, and are still underestimated because data are only available for a small number of the chemicals which people are exposed to every day.
https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/WHO-HEP-ECH-EHD-21.01