

*Monday 11 and Tuesday 12 May 2020*

*To be held by webconference (due to COVID-19 pandemic and travel restrictions)*

## **BIENNIAL REPORT OF THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (OHSC), 2018–2019**

1. The IARC Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) is composed of 17 members chosen to represent each laboratory floor, the epidemiology groups, the Biological Resource Centre (BRC), the Latarjet building and the Administrative Services Office (ASO). The OHSC also includes the Staff Physician and the Laboratory Safety Officer.
2. The OHSC met seven times during 2018–2019. The minutes of each meeting are posted on the Intranet.
3. Since 1 November 2019, Dr Rosita Accardi-Gheit has been appointed Chair of the OHSC, replacing Dr Florence Le Calvez-Kelm who has been appointed Chair of the Laboratory Steering Committee (LSC). Dr Lynnette Fernandez Cuesta has joined the committee as representative of the Staff Association Committee, and Dr Lamia Tallaa is the new representative of the 5<sup>th</sup> floor (replacing Dr Veronique Bouvard).

### **A. General well-being**

4. Sedentary behaviours are a leading cause of preventable mortality in developed countries and must therefore be considered as an occupational risk. After the success of the first IARC pedometer challenge organized in 2017 to fight sedentary behaviour at work, the Committee organized and launched an innovative second edition, which was very well attended. The second edition of the pedometer challenge took place from 13 November to 8 December 2018. Similarly to the first edition, groups of five IARC staff could challenge themselves to increase their daily number of steps and compare themselves to the WHO recommendations of 10 000 steps a day. The innovation relied on the riddle-solving within the teams where pictures of special places in Lyon had to be reached by foot to take pictures. This initiative was a success, recording 158 participants, and 35 202 358 steps in total. Access to the Agency floors (in the main tower) from the East side stairs of the Tower building had been encouraged during the pedometer challenge; however, upon request of the Committee, the west side stairs were exclusively used in case of personnel evacuation. In 2019, WHO's World's Healthiest Organization initiative was launched with the scope of integrating a pedometer challenge with preventive advice to maintain or improve healthy behaviours of WHO staff. This initiative will be further expanded in 2020 incorporating cancer prevention advice from IARC.

5. In line with WHO recommendation of adopting healthier dietary habits, the OHSC asked the replacement of some of the sugar-coated items and sodas by healthier products in the vending machines. Administration removed all sugary items and banned alcoholic beverages throughout the IARC campus.

6. During the biennium 2018–2019, the OHSC collaborated with LSB on the critical review of the updated version of the IARC Safety Manual and its translation into English. The Safety Manual had been regularly reviewed and updated by the several members of the Committee. At the end of the biennium, in November 2019, to encourage all staff to use the Manual and get more familiar with it, the OHSC proposed to create a quiz, challenging the staff about different general or laboratory-based safety issues, described in the Manual.

7. One of the most unfortunate events of 2019 for the OHSC was the departure of the Staff Physician, Dr Chantal Ferracin (on 12 May 2019). Dr Michel Baduraux temporarily covered the vacant position (from 4 June until September 2019). On 27 September Dr Caroline Cross, Director of the Staff Health and Wellbeing service (SHWS), WHO/HQ, came to IARC to meet Ms Dina D'Amico (former Human Resources Officer) and Dr Tamás Landeszi (Director of Administration and Finance) to make an "état des lieux" of the IARC Medical Services. Issues about sensitive medical cases at IARC ('Sick Leave under Insurance Coverage' (SLIC), return to work procedure, etc.) were discussed and modalities were identified in order to support the Agency until the Staff Physician position is filled. Interim measures to guarantee follow up of staff health (periodic medical examination, entry and end-of-contract medical examination, laboratory workers medical clearance, vaccination, etc.) were put in place. Upon request by the Administration, three medical doctors and one nurse from SHWS/HQ came to IARC (on five dates) and provided medical examination and advice to about 60 Staff members. In the 2018–2019 biennium, two flu vaccination sessions were organized: in 2018 (from 23 October 2018 to 7 February 2019) Dr Ferracin provided flu vaccines to 77 persons; and in November 2019 a second session was organized by SHWS/HQ when 80 persons were vaccinated against the flu at IARC. The Committee discussed with the Administration and the Director the need to urgently recruit a new Staff Physician. The Administration explained that this recruitment is of highest priority. After two unsuccessful recruitment rounds, the position was increased from 50% to 70%, but even so interest from qualified candidates remained limited. While the position was still vacant at the end of 2019, the Director of Administration and Finance informed OHSC that on the long term, a possible solution is that IARC and WHO share the international professional Staff Physician to be recruited for the new WHO Academy being established in Lyon. Until that position is filled, WHO will continue to provide support to IARC from Geneva and IARC will be subcontracting supplementary local medical support, as required.

8. The OHSC were involved in some of the discussions around the IARC "Nouveau Centre". More specifically, the OHSC has provided (and will continue to do so) advice on laboratory safety and functionality matters: the Committee has, for instance, played a key role in advising the IARC Nouveau Centre Working Group on the optimal laboratory benches-coating material. Some OHSC members were also involved in making critical choices about the new building's cafeteria (e.g. choice of functioning mode: i.e. delivery of already prepared meals versus cooking on site).

## B. Laboratories

9. The OHSC (as well as the Laboratory Steering Committee) has endorsed new procedures for the transport of biological materials, initiated by the LSB Group. These new procedures have been put in place with the aim of minimizing the risk of chemical or biological contaminations of the elevator surface during transport of laboratory reagents and material, vertically, from one floor to another, as well as of the spaces (corridors and offices) outside the laboratories. The past procedure involving transport of laboratory material by researchers wearing gloves in the security lift used by technical personnel who do not wear appropriate protections, and shared with the lab personnel for transport of biological or chemical elements, was not ideal and was revised to better protect everyone. The procedure was approved by the members of the LSC and training for all the laboratory staff was organized by the Laboratory Safety Officer, Dr Villar. Along the same line, and in a further effort to minimize transfer of laboratory reagents and material from one floor to another (notably electrophoresis gels stained with DNA intercalants), some of the laboratory activities were redistributed and a gel electrophoresis common room was reconfigured on the 6<sup>th</sup> floor. Two developing machines dedicated exclusively to electrophoresis gel were placed in this laboratory.
10. To promote personnel well-being, the OHSC asked for ergonomics training for the laboratory staff: the training was welcomed (23 participants took part).
11. A new **procedure to host scientific visitors** working in IARC laboratories for a short duration was reviewed by the Committee and put in place in 2019.
12. The OHSC has endorsed the Laboratory Safety Officer, Dr Villar, in organizing and providing **training and courses** on chemical hazards and biological risks to laboratory workers.

### *Radioprotection*

13. In November 2017, Dr Villar became the new “personne compétente en radioprotection” for the Agency. During this biennium, she renewed the agreement to use radioisotopes delivered by the “Autorité de Sécurité Nucléaire” that expired on May 2019. In agreement with the OHSC and the LSC, the authorization has not been renewed for all radioisotopes. Dr Villar reported in fact that many radioisotopes ( $^{32}\text{P}$ ,  $^{33}\text{P}$ ,  $^3\text{H}$ ,  $^{35}\text{S}$ ,  $^{14}\text{C}$ ) have not been used in the Agency for many years. She also reported the lack of detention of  $^{133}\text{Ba}$ . Thereafter, the number of laboratories dedicated to work with radioactive material/substances which were included in the authorization, has been considerably reduced. The authorization, valid until the 4 February 2024, only includes the detention of  $^{125}\text{I}$  (and waste management) in Room SMHS3 and the  $^{63}\text{Ni}$  in the Gas chromatograph.

### *Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) authorization*

14. The agreement to use Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) delivered by the “Commission de Génie Génétique” of the “Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche” has been further validated until 14 June 2024. This body verifies the proper installation, safe working conditions and proper waste disposal processes depending on the classification of GMOs used.

*Incidents and accidents*

15. Accident and identification of potentially hazardous situation for laboratories personnel, during the biennium: following the attempt of two PhD students to handle the autoclave placed in the laundry laboratory (lab. 803) without authorization, or appropriate training and taking in consideration the risk of such a hazardous situation, the access to the laundry laboratory has been limited by locking the door and providing keys to a restricted number of persons from each laboratory group (badge access control was considered, but excluded as too expensive). Ten work accidents were reported during the last biennium: minor lab accidents (6), commuting accidents (3) and one accident in one of the lifts (1). The circumstances of each accident were evaluated and rectifications made, when appropriate, to prevent associated risks of recurrence.