



NEWSLETTER

International Federation of Environmental Health

April 2011 Edition

Welcome to the April Edition of the IFEH Newsletter

Every year the World Health Organisation (WHO) organises a number of annual events throughout the year to highlight certain health issues. During the next three months three issues of particular interest to environmental health professionals around the world will be the focus of attention.

World Health Day is celebrated on 7 April to mark the founding of WHO. Each year, the Organization selects a key global health issue and organizes international, regional and local events on the Day and throughout the year to highlight the selected area. World Health Day 2011 will focus on antimicrobial resistance and its global spread. Antimicrobial resistance threatens the continued effectiveness of many medicines used today to treat the sick, while at the same time it risks jeopardizing important advances being made against major infectious killers. In the past infectious diseases were the primary cause of mortality in mankind prior to the discovery and use of antimicrobials. In much of the developing world where access to good quality medicines is difficult, infections continue to be the major killers, and in all countries healthcare-associated infections with resistant microorganisms are a major cause of death. The two main reasons for the rise and spread of resistant microbes are overuse and misuse of antimicrobials, and the spread of resistant organisms between individuals, communities, and countries.

World Malaria Day, which was instituted by the World Health Assembly at its 60th session in May 2007, will this year be celebrated on the 25 April, and is a day for recognizing the global effort to provide effective control of malaria. Approximately half of the world's population is at risk of malaria, particularly those living in lower-income countries. It infects more than 500 million people per year and kills more than 1 million. The main areas where the effect of malaria is felt most is in sub-Saharan Africa but the disease is also found in Asia, Latin America, the Middle East and even parts of Europe. A major concern highlighted by the WHO at the beginning of this year concerns artemisinin resistance. Artemisinin based combination therapies, is the most potent weapon in treating falciparum malaria, the deadliest form of the disease. Resistance to artemisinins has already emerged in areas on the Cambodia-Thailand border. Resistance to medicines prescribed, particularly in the absence of an affordable alternative, could leave many countries exposed to major public health problems.

World No Tobacco Day is celebrated every year on the 31 May to highlight the health risks associated with tobacco use and advocating effective policies to reduce tobacco consumption. After hypertension tobacco use is the second largest cause of death globally and is responsible for killing one in 10 adults worldwide. In many ways this WHO Annual Event also, like the previous two items, suffers from resistance...resistance by some governments to put in place effective policies to combat smoking, as outlined in the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and resistance by multi-national companies involved in globalization of the tobacco epidemic.

The three annual events scheduled to take place in the next three months are important parts of a large jigsaw aimed at improving and protecting public health worldwide. Environmental health professionals around the world will be involved in these initiatives to varying degrees depending on the priorities in their country. It is incumbent on us all to overcome traditional resistance to change and drive forward new initiatives to improve Public Health worldwide.

In recent weeks the world's attention has been focussed on the terrible tragedies that have unfolded, first the earthquake New Zealand and second the massive earthquake and resulting tsunami in Japan. Although the earthquakes were of different magnitudes, with different outcomes, both incidents have caused widespread destruction and suffering, and loss of life. The effect on the general population of both countries has been traumatic. Basic public health services such as clean drinking water and sanitation became a priority and much of the environmental health service response has been directed towards ensuring that affected areas are provided with these essential services. As if the tsunami in Japan was not bad enough that country has also had to deal with problems within its nuclear facilities, as a result of the earthquake and tsunami, resulting in concerns over radiation leaks. At the time of writing raised levels of radiation have been found in food and in the environment and environmental health personnel in the region are involved in testing foodstuffs. In both countries it will be many years before there is a return to normality. Messages of sympathy on behalf of the IFEH by our President have been posted on the IFEH website.



A word from our President

Hello and greetings from Canada. We like many others in the northern hemisphere have experienced colder than normal winter weather this year, with record snow falls and cold temperatures, while our counterparts in the southern hemisphere have experienced torrential rainfalls, mudslides, flooding and typhoons. Here in Canada last summer, we recorded the highest summertime average temperatures ever. Yes Virginia, climate change is no myth! Are we as environmental health professionals doing our part in working towards solutions to climate change? The International Federation of Environmental Health not only has a Policy Statement on climate change, we have actively participated in the recent symposiums in Mexico and Cancun on the subject. Yes, there is still more we can do, however we are somewhat limited by budgetary constraints and human resource capacity.

2010 ended on a rather sad note with the passing of Roy Emerson, the very first President of the International Federation of Environmental Health. Many IFEH members and representatives attended Roy's funeral and tributes to Roy can be found on the IFEH website. We owe a great debt of gratitude to Roy for his leadership and vision in those early years as he skilfully guided the IFEH forward from a concept to inception, to building a strong and developing organization. Thank you Roy, we will miss you.

After the 11th World Congress held in Vancouver, Canada, the IFEH was chastised by the Friends of the Human Race, a group of environmental and public health professionals, for 'being too exclusive in hosting a Congress that was... a very white, English speaking, northern hemisphere bias.' 'Those from developing countries who did make it were more likely to be academics than practitioners.' No doubt there will always be a "regional bias" in each and every Congress location based primarily on economic cost consideration. Are we exclusive or are we slightly minimally inclusive challenged?

On that note, I would encourage all members to attend a World Congress, and we look forward to once again welcoming the world at the next World Congress in Vilnius, Lithuania in May of 2012. The hosting of World Congresses around the globe is what defines the IFEH as a truly international organization. I would encourage all member organizations to consider hosting a World Congress.

The next Board of Directors meeting will be held shortly and I look forward to providing the membership details of the discussions in the next edition of the Journal. We look forward to welcoming the Regional Chairpersons to attending their first Board of Directors meeting.

As I have said previously, the Federation exists for its members and we continue to strive to provide global environmental health leadership. We need to increase the number of environmental health organizations and academic institutions as Federation members. Global environmental health issues have no geographical or political boundaries. I would encourage each of you to become an individual member of the IFEH and to be active within your Region. Your participation is what makes us a global entity.

In closing, I continue to welcome your input and thoughts as we go forward and appreciate your input on how we can make our World Congresses more inclusive in the future as we continue to shape environmental public health globally.

New Zealand earthquake

The devastating 6.3 magnitude earthquake that hit Christchurch, New Zealand, at lunchtime on the 22 February killed 148 people and injured over 2500 people. The damage done to property and the life of the city is, at present, incalculable. Our sympathies are extended to all those affected by this natural disaster. Our colleagues in the New Zealand Institute of Environmental Health are very much involved in the aftermath, assisting the Emergency Planning activities and getting basic essential services of water, food, shelter, and sanitation back to the people of Christchurch. I recently heard from the NZIEH President, Carole Simpson, who could tell me that all their members are safe although some have sustained damage to their own property. There have also been some acts of extreme courage and bravery by members in the immediate aftermath of the earthquake. I am sure all members of the IFEH would join with me in extending our best wishes to our colleagues in New Zealand.

IFEH board meeting and European Regional Group meeting

The next meeting of the IFEH Board will be held in Lisbon, Portugal on the 1 April 2011. This meeting will coincide with the European Regional Group which will take place on Saturday 2 and Sunday 3 April 2011. Arrangements for these meetings have been made by the Portuguese Society of Environmental Health.

IFEH Council meeting and AGM

The next meeting of the IFEH Board and Council, and the AGM will be held in Bali, Indonesia at the invitation of the Indonesia Environmental Health Specialists Association (IEHSA) on the 24 and 25 September 2011.



IEHSA National Conference in BALI

To coincide with the IFEH meetings taking place in Bali the Indonesia Environmental Health Specialists Association, Student Section, will hold a 'Youth Summit' on the afternoon of 25 September and 26 September, 2011 to celebrate the first World Environmental Health Day. Invitations will be issued to students from other IFEH member organisations to attend this Conference and to meetings of the IEHSA Student Section. The Council of the IFEH decided, at its meeting in Singapore in 2009, to hold World Environmental Health Day on the last week of September each year to mark the date of the official inauguration of the IFEH in 1985. The event this year will be the first since that decision was taken.

Membership News

The *Association of Public Health Inspectors Cyprus (APHIC)* will hold its Annual Dinner and meeting on the 7 May 2011 at the Elysium Beach Hotel, Paphos. Over 300 delegates are due to attend this event. The dinner will be attended by the Minister of Health, Dr Christos Patsalides, the Permanent Secretary from the Ministry of Health, and the Director of Medical and Public Health Services. During the dinner a number of awards will be presented by the APHIC.

The *Lithuanian Union of Hygienists and Epidemiologists (LUHE)* together with Faculty of Medicine of Vilnius University, Ministry of Health of the Republic of Lithuania and Vilnius Public Health Centre have organised a scientific conference 'Let's Unite for Public Health' on 8th of April, 2011. This conference will cover a broad spectrum of relevant public health issues, such as antibacterial resistance, policy development, public administration, as well as an historical overview in Lithuania. The conference is organised to celebrate 70 years since the first official public health institution in Lithuania, the Vilnius Public Health Centre was established. In 1941 a typhoid fever epidemic devastated Vilnius and, as a result, the institutions for disease prevention and control were established in Lithuania. These institutions are now called Regional Public Health Centres.

The *Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS)* will hold its Annual Conference in the Glynhill Hotel, Renfrew on the 25/26 May 2011. The theme of the conference is 'Health Protection – Future Challenges'.

The *National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)* will hold its Annual Educational Conference and Exhibition in Columbus, Ohio from the 18 to 20 June 2011.

The *Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI)* will hold its 77th National Education Conference in Halifax, Nova Scotia from the 26 to 29 June 2011. The theme of this year's conference is 'Strengthening Collaboration: Strengthening the Profession' which embraces the collaborative network that Nova Scotia and other agencies employ to foster a more effective and integrated approach to environmental public health issues.

The *Indonesia Environmental Health Specialists Association (EHSAs)* is now accrediting the Universitas Indonesia Center for Environmental and Industrial Health (CEIH) environmental health risk assessment training course as one of main programs towards continuing professional development. Since 2004 the CEIH has been routinely offering the course for health officers throughout Indonesia. The Center promotes and facilitates qualified trainees to be recognized nationally and internationally as Environmental Health Risk Assessors (EHRA) as required by Indonesian legislation (i.e. UU 32/2009, PP 27/1999, and Kepmen LH 08/2006, Kepmenkes 876/2001). The CEIH ran the EHRA course on 7 to 9 March 2011 for 30 environmental health officers from 16 provinces across Indonesia at the Health Training Center of the Indonesian Ministry of Health in Lemah Abang, West Java. The next course will be offered in August 2011 and the CEIH will be inviting eligible trainees who wish to go forward for certification and license in the near future.

The *Environmental Health Officers' Association (EHOA)* and the Northern Ireland Centre of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health (CIEH) will hold their annual All Ireland/All Island Forum in the Radisson Blue Farnham Estate Hotel in Cavan, Ireland on the 5 and 6 May 2011.



Environmental Health Australia (EHA) & La Trobe University

Last year the EHA and La Trobe University, Victoria decided to create an annual award for the top student in the final year of study of the Graduate Diploma in Environmental Health course. The award has been named the James C Smith award in recognition of work carried out by Jim Smith, former President of the EHA, in this field. The outstanding student in 2010 was Ms Cass Durkin who is pictured receiving the inaugural award from Dr Jim Smith.



Finally the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in July 2011. If you have any news for the Newsletter from your organisation please send it to me by the first week of June. My thanks go to Robert Bradbury, Abdur Rahman, Henning Hansen and Andrew Forteach and who have assisted in the production of this issue.

If you wish to feature any news from your organisation in the next IFEH Newsletter, please contact: Bernard Forteach, Honorary Public Relations Officer, Email: pro@ifeh.org