



NEWSLETTER

International Federation of Environmental Health

July 2009 Edition

Welcome to the July Newsletter

Much has been written recently about the threat posed by the current outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1). On the 11 June 2009 the scientific criteria for an influenza pandemic were met and accordingly the World Health Organisation declared an influenza pandemic. So far 116 countries have officially reported 70,893 laboratory confirmed cases of this new infection (29th June 2009). Those countries with over 1000 confirmed cases - United States of America, Mexico, Canada, Australia, Chile, Japan, China, Argentina and the United Kingdom - account for 86% of the total. A total of 311 Influenza A (H1N1) infection related deaths have so far been reported.

Most of the cases of infection appear to be mild and do not require hospital admission but this situation may change, perhaps rapidly. A small proportion of the existing cases have led to severe illness and death. The current outbreak, therefore, underlines the importance of the value of international cooperation and preparedness in dealing with the pandemic. Environmental health professionals are an important part of the wider public health workforce and, in the event that a second wave of transmission occurs causing more serious illness, we should also be prepared to play our part and work with other agencies. In Scotland, Environmental Health Officers working within local authorities are already supporting strategic planning by NHS Health Boards for a potential increase in cases in the autumn of this year.

Council meeting and AGM

The next meeting of the IFEH Council will take place on Saturday 18 July and Sunday 19 July with the AGM taking place on Sunday morning. The meetings will be held in the Changi Meeting Room, Holiday Inn Atrium, 317 Outram Road, Singapore 169075. The arrangements for this meeting have been made by our colleagues in the Society of Environmental Health, Singapore. Following the meetings, on Monday 20 July, there will be a morning seminar 'Professional Sharing Series' held in the Singapore Environment Institute at which a number of IFEH Officers will be speaking.

The meetings taking place in the Lion City of Singapore will, we hope, attract a good turn out of members, particularly from the Asia Pacific Regional Group, to what hopefully will be an interesting and informative weekend.

Conference season

The Environmental Health Officers' Association (EHOA) together with the Northern Ireland Centre of the Chartered Institute of Environmental Health held an 'All Island Environmental Health Forum' in the Hodson Bay Hotel, Athlone, County Westmeath on the 21 and 22 May. The Conference was a great success and was attended by around 200 delegates with speakers coming from all over Europe.

The Royal Environmental Health Institute of Scotland (REHIS) held their annual conference in the Western House Hotel, Ayr on the 13 and 14 May which again was well attended by members and guests from other organisations.

The Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors (CIPHI) held their 75th Annual Educational Conference in Kananakis, Alberta from the 3 to 6 May and again this conference was well attended and a great success.

The South African Institute of Environmental Health (SAIEH) held its 5th Biennial National Conference on 23-25 March 2009 at the Emperors Palace Hotel, Kempton Park. The theme of the conference was "municipal health services, 2010 and beyond...." This theme was chosen to address environmental health challenges that professionals will be facing during the 2010 World Cup, hosted by South Africa, as well as getting the professionals ready for post 2010 challenges. Also the new National Health Act 2003 defines the components that make up environmental health services at municipal level.

The conference was attended by approximately two hundred environmental health professionals country wide. Keynote addresses were delivered by the Deputy Minister of Health, Dr M. Sefularo, the Executive Mayor of Ekurhuleni Metropolitan Municipality, Councillor N. Mekgoe and the President of the SAIEH,



Mr Jerry Chaka. The outcome of the conference was a set of conference resolutions that bind both the SAIEH and the Ministry of Health to actions within an agreed timescale. (See attached resolutions below). The first meeting between the Ministry and SAIEH to work out implementation of resolutions took place on 15 May 2009.

Resolution 1: The National Department of Health and the SAIEH immediately start the process for the establishment of the National Environmental Health Forum and it should be supported financially by the DOH. Commencement date should be within 30 days and launched within six months.

Resolution 2: The DOH to develop a National strategy for the devolution and implementation of Municipal Health Services by the District and Metro Municipalities throughout South Africa

Resolution 3: DOH in consultation with DPLG and National Treasury reissue a directive to District Municipalities and Metro's to implement MHS as per their statutory mandate

Resolution 4: The DOH and the SAIEH revisit sections of the National Health Act 2003 (61 of 2003) that refers to EHS and effect the necessary amendments

Resolution 5: DOH to develop a National Environmental Health Strategy for the country which will be followed by a National Environmental Health plan for South Africa

Resolution 6: The DOH to distribute the integrated Environmental Health plan for 2009 FIFA Confederation Cup and 2010 FIFA World Cup to the SAIEH and all municipalities in South Africa.

Resolution 7: The DOH and SAIEH must fast track research and funding for furthering the science Environmental Health and encourage practitioners to do the same.

Resolution 8: The DOH must monitor, evaluate and review the comprehensive National Environmental Health Information system.

Resolution 9: The DOH must provide financial support for continued professional development of practitioners.

Resolution 10: The DOH and SAIEH should evaluate the health consequence of climate change and develop a response strategy which should be implemented country wide.

Resolution 11: The DOH and the SAIEH to establish a steering committee to monitor, evaluate and review progress in terms of the conference resolutions.

Resolution 12: The DOH to call for an Environmental Health Summit within 6 months to clarify and address all aspects of Environmental Health which should culminate in the launch of the National Environmental Health Forum.

This conference was regarded by most delegates as a resounding success and a milestone for environmental health in South Africa.

Copies of papers presented at all conferences mentioned above can be obtained from the respective organisers by going to each Member Organisation website.

Environmental Health Australia

Eastern Australia is still either enduring the impact of severe weather or recovering from the earlier emergencies from floods and fire, writes Jim Smith, National President, EHA. I attended the Queensland Branch annual conference on the Sunshine Coast last month the theme of which was climate change. I travelled from Melbourne, which is located in a temperate climate and coming into winter, and has posted the warmest weather and lowest rainfall on record for autumn to the Sunshine Coast which has had so much rain and severe weather (no sunshine!) that a caravan park was evacuated and beaches and shops were closed. A perfect place to have a conference on climate change! The conference was an exciting and informative one with an excellent speaking program.

This month the EHA's Environmental Health Course Advisory Committee finalised its process for the accreditation of the first indigenous Environmental Health Officer degree program offered by the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education, Northern Territory. This marks an important achievement by Batchelor in indigenous environmental health education as it now provides training for Indigenous Environmental Health Workers and training for EHOs.



Plans are in place to develop honours and post-graduate programs. Given the dire environmental health standards experienced by indigenous communities in Australia this initiative must be applauded as it will be another strategy for building the capacity of indigenous communities. Congratulations to the environmental health staff led by Professor Peter Stephenson.

The Royal Commission into the Victorian Bushfires is currently sitting and the media is reporting widely on communication issues and the preparedness of our emergency services for these events. There is no doubt that government will be focusing on emergency management for some considerable time. EHA has commenced a process to review and deliver the current emergency management courses for public and environmental health practitioners across Australia and, given the severe weather we have been experiencing, there is no doubt we will have to ensure all our members around Australia are prepared for the community's sake.

The latest concern has been the outbreak of Influenza A (H1N1), particularly in Victoria. Everything points to a large epidemic and there has been consideration of preventing crowds gathering e.g. at the football. I think the community has suddenly realized it is serious if we are going to impact on sporting events! One thing about working in the environmental health there is always something new.

2nd All Africa Environmental Health Congress

Following on from a very successful event held in Nairobi in August 2007 the Africa Regional Group is organising the 2nd All Africa Environmental Health Congress which will be held in Lilongwe, Malawi from Monday 24 May to Thursday 27 May 2010. The vision of the Congress is the improvement of the standards of environmental health in Africa and the objectives of the Congress are to raise the profile of environmental health in Africa, to share best practices of environmental health services delivery in Africa, to enhance inter-country collaboration in environmental health practice, to address the training needs of environmental health, to promote the environmental health needs of children in Africa and to promote environmental health research.

For further information concerning this congress please contact tracythomson@africa-online.net or www.poly.ac.mw/2aaencongress

World Rabies Day – 29 September 2009

The mission of World Rabies Day, which this year takes place on Tuesday 29 September 2009, is to raise the awareness about the impact of human and animal rabies, how easy it is to prevent it, and how to eliminate the main global sources. In humans rabies is 100% preventable yet every year more than 55,000 people, mostly in Africa and Asia, die from this disease...a rate of one person every ten minutes. Safe and effective vaccines are available although usage is low in developing countries primarily due to the high cost. To find out more about this worthwhile campaign go to www.worldrabiesday.org

Finally the next edition of the Newsletter will be published in October 2009. If you have any news for the Newsletter from your organisation please send it to me by the first week in September. My thanks go to Jim Smith, Jerry Chaka, Andrew Forteach and Henning Hansen 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, President, Email: president@ifeh.org