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This edition of Applied Biosafety contains a number of articles related to global polio eradication. ABSA members will play an important role in the first step toward the eradication goal. Within the next few years, given that the only sources of wild polioviruses will be in laboratories, appropriate biosafety practices and containment for handling these materials are crucial. A national survey of all laboratories that may contain wild poliovirus infectious or potentially infectious materials is planned for October 2002. This survey will alert laboratories to the eradication plan, encourage the disposition of materials no longer needed, and establish a national inventory of laboratories retaining such materials. Laboratories on the inventory will be notified to implement enhanced biosafety measures as required. Many of our members will be involved in implementing the survey in their laboratories and I strongly encourage each of us to participate in this global effort. Further information regarding the survey can be found on our web site at www.absa.org.

The Scientific Program for our Annual Biological Safety Conference in San Francisco in October 2002 has been finalized and can also be found on our web site. Once again, the Training and Education Committee has provided a wide selection of preconference courses at both the beginner and advanced levels. We are also pleased to include many interesting paper presentations, posters, and roundtable discussions. A special thanks to Rosamond Rutledge-Burns and her Scientific Program Committee for putting together an excellent program. The Local Arrangements Committee, chaired by Larry Gibbs with support from our sponsors (Marsh, Technical Safety Services, Stericycle, EORM, and Science Applications International Corporation), has organized a terrific local program. I look forward to seeing everyone at the evening of “Tastes of San Francisco” at the Exploratorium and don’t forget to attend our ABSA Member’s Meeting on Tuesday afternoon.

I will be moderating a “late breaking news” session at the end of the conference, similar to last year’s discussion on bioterrorism. The impact of bioterrorism on our biosafety community continues today. Biosecurity measures have been developed in response to questions regarding the adequacy of security at laboratories that work with, store, or transport pathogens and toxins. Stricter regulatory requirements (e.g., restricting access to biological agents, registration and/or certification of facilities possessing bioterrorism agents, personnel screening) have also been introduced. The demand for and construction of containment facilities has increased steadily, along with increases in the cost of containment facilities, demand for biosafety practitioners to oversee these facilities, and demand for biosafety training for those who design, build, and work in containment facilities. Traditional emergency response plans for biosafety practitioners have included response to spills of infectious materials, laboratory accidents/exposures, and breaches of containment. These plans have been augmented to include plans specifically for bioterrorism incidents. Biosecurity breaches, theft of pathogens, and responses to suspicious packages and anthrax hoax letters are all now included in these plans. In response to bioterrorism incidents, standard laboratory decontamination procedures are now being modified for nonlaboratory areas that present unique challenges (e.g., mail rooms, office buildings). With the help of our Communications Committee, we will continue to post relevant information and links on our web site to aid ABSA members in bioterrorism planning and response.

Finally, I thank you for your support and wish Barbara Johnson success in the upcoming year.