



ABSAs Committee Reports

The following information was provided by the chairs of the indicated committees to keep members abreast of their activities.

Communications Committee

Melina Kinsey, BS, RBP, Chair
Midwest Research Institute of Florida
Palm Bay, Florida

Since the launch of the new ABSAs web site on December 11, 2002, the Communications Committee has been busy updating and enhancing the web site at the request of the membership and ABSAs committees. We are still on target to implement a Members Only section by October 2003 which will include a registry of ABSAs expertise and speaker's bureau developed by the Technical Resources Committee. The Communication Committee's objective is the promotion and continued development and oversight of the ABSAs web site (www.absa.org) in order that it remains the fundamental means of transmitting and receiving information for the membership. To fulfill this goal the Communication Committee is in need of volunteers to serve as communication liaisons to educate and promote the strengths of our web site with the other ABSAs committees. When you choose to serve on a volunteer committee, you open up a world of possibilities for networking, professional growth, and career opportunities while serving your profession. Volunteer member groups are the backbone of the ABSAs.

Local Arrangements Committee

Harriet Izenberg, Chair
University of Pennsylvania
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

The Philadelphia Local Arrangements Committee has been busy planning the 2003 conference. In addition to helping plan and present the first pre-conference course on molecular biology, the LAC has also worked with the Scientific Program Committee to provide speakers on SARS and other topics of interest. The committee has a few surprises in store—starting with a special welcome at the opening reception. This year, our special event will be held at the Franklin Institute, a grand neoclassical science museum founded in 1824. The Institute is located on the Benjamin Franklin Parkway, within walking distance of the hotel, for those interested in a pre- or postprandial stroll. In addition to food provided by Frog Commissary Catering, one of the city's finest caterers, there will also be opportunity to network, dance, explore interactive museum exhibits, and enjoy an IMAX movie.

Philadelphia has been called the "City of Brotherly Love" and the "Place that Loves You Back™." Either way, it has much to offer. Historically, there is the Liberty Bell and Independence Hall, where the Declaration of Independence and the U.S. Constitution were created. Visit Elfreth's Alley to get a glimpse of life in the days of our forefathers. Stroll or jog along the Benjamin Franklin Parkway and the river drives. Visit the Philadelphia Museum of Art, a short walk from our hotel, or take a carriage ride through the historical district.

Too lazy to walk? Ride the Ducks, Philly's newest attraction, is a combination of land and water sight-seeing fun. This 80 minute, fun-packed ride is both entertaining and informative, taking you through the city's Historic District, South Street, and Society Hill. Then splash into the Delaware for a relaxing cruise—all on board one amazing vehicle.

And don't forget to visit America's First Zoo. The Philadelphia Zoo was founded in 1859. However, due to the Civil War, it opened its gates 15

years later on July 1, 1874.

If you are a foodie, Philly is the place for you. Everything from soft pretzels to cheesesteaks to five-star restaurants is at your fingertips! The LAC is busy as I write, preparing a list of their favorite dining spots for your enjoyment. And sports fanatics should not forget Philly sports teams, the Phillies, the Eagles and the Flyers...if you are in luck, there will be a game on while you are in town.

Thanks to the support of our sponsors (Novartis, Tier DE, the Baker Company, ENV Services, Merck, Aventis, Pfizer, and P&K Microbiology Services) and the hard work of the Training and Education and Scientific Program Committees, the 2003 Philly conference is shaping up into an event not to be missed. The LAC is available to answer any questions you may have before as well as during the conference—and we all look forward to seeing you there!

Marketing and Media Committee

Sandy Ellis, Chair
DUH2A
Atlanta, Georgia

During the past year, the ABSA Media and Marketing Committee has been working on a new brochure and new graphics for the portable exhibit. The new images and text will help ABSA attract new members worldwide and portray ABSA in a professional light. It is ABSA's intent to utilize the booth and new brochures not only at the ABSA annual conference and affiliate meetings, but also at the conferences and meetings of similar organizations. During 2003, the existing booth traveled well to the BioSecurity Symposium in Alexandria, Virginia, the Tradelines Conference in Hilton Head, South Carolina, and the European Biological Safety Association Conference in Lyon, France.

The ABSA Media and Marketing Committee extends an open invitation for members to participate in attending the booth at any venue to help field questions from new and potential members with respect to *membership rewards*. As we are all aware, there is a wealth of knowledge to be gained at the conferences above and beyond the scheduled

program, plus there are networking opportunities and the stimulus for a chance forum.

Special thanks from ABSA is extended to Lasha Orzechowski and Rick Sellar of Velocity Design Works, CUH2A/Smith Carter and Hemisphere Engineering, Inc. for their efforts and contributions towards the new brochures and new graphics for the portable exhibit. Additional gratitude is given to Health Canada for the donation of an ILC/Dover positive pressure suit which gives the portable exhibit an extra three-dimensional appeal.

Registration Evaluation Board

Richard Rebar, Chair
GlaxoSmithKline
King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

The purpose of the Registration Evaluation Board is to review applications for registration as a biological safety professional and determine if the applicant meets the established criteria. The board is composed of five members. The 2002-2003 committee members are Manuel Barbeito; Jack Keene; Betty Kupskey; Richard Rebar, Chair; and Don Vesley.

Summary of activity from February 2003-July 2003: 7 RBP applications received; 2 applications disapproved; 2 applications approved; and 3 applications pending.

The qualifications of the following individuals have been evaluated by the Registration Evaluation Review Board and based upon this review have been granted Registered Biosafety Professional (RBP) status by the American Biological Safety Association (ABSA). The following individuals are listed with their affiliation as of the approval date: Rene Aline Ricks—Registration number: 105, Health & Safety Consultant, April 8, 2003; and, Patricia L. Olinger—Registration number: 106, Pharmacia Corporation, May 12, 2003.

There are currently a total of 106 Registered Biological Safety Professionals. Please visit the ABSA web site (www.absa.org) to view application materials and criteria for becoming an RBP.

Scientific Program Committee

Karen B. Byers, MS, RBP, CBSP, Chair
Dana Farber Cancer Institute
Boston, Massachusetts

The Scientific Program Committee has developed an exciting program for the 2003 ABSA Conference in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Thirty-six excellent platform presentations will provide the latest information on a wide range of topics, including infectious agent research models, case studies and research on emergency preparedness, compliance with select agent regulations, occupational health and safety in the care of nonhuman primates, review and training associated with gene transfer protocols, innovative training techniques, developing and implementing biosecurity plans, biosecurity in the design process, containment laboratory design, critical biosafety program elements, evaluation of regulatory compliance (including lab audit by PCR), and decontamination. There will be plenty to discuss, both in the program hall and outside!

On Monday, a special poster session will allow ABSA members to grill the presenters on a wide range of topics. Examples include PERV, identification of select agents, community response to a biodefense lab, public health efforts to control plague, and decontamination. You'll want to rest before you come to the conference because there are also five workshop/panel discussion formats planned. The Training and Education Committee has organized a workshop entitled "Implementation of the New Select Agent Regulation: Fine-tuning Your Program." In addition, Lynn Harding, CBSP, organized a workshop on "The Open Laboratory Design Concept in 2003-How Well Does This Design Concept Work?" Furthermore, we are thrilled that three ABSA affiliates have organized and will present the following workshops of interest to biosafety professionals:

Improving Responses to Bioterrorism: Lessons Learned from the Anthrax Attacks. Robert Curtis, USDOL/OSHA, Salt Lake City, UT; John H. Bridges III, USPS, Washington, DC; David Ippolito, USDOL/OSHA, Washington, DC.

Microbiology; Friend or Foe: The Challenge to Identify a Balanced Approach to Biosafety, Biosecu-

urity, and Public Health. Nicoletta Previsani, Biosafety Programme, World Health Organization Communicable Disease Surveillance and Response, and Bradford A. Kay, MS, MPH, DrPH, Coordinator, Laboratory Capacity Development WHO/OMS CSR/Lyon Office 58, Avenue Debourg 69007 Lyon, France.

Compliance with the NIH Guidelines: Questions Answered by the NIH Office of Biotechnology (OBA). Allan C. Shipp, Director of Outreach, and Stephen Rose, PhD, OBA Deputy Director for the Recombinant DNA Program.

I haven't even mentioned the exciting speakers who will present the Wedum and Eagleson Memorial Lectures, or the student presentation which won the Gross Memorial Award. This stimulating program for the ABSA conference was developed by the dedicated members of the SPC, who responded to innumerable e-mails, participated in several conference calls, and got us to this point. They are Andrew Braun, Maureen Best (Council Liaison), Karen Byers (Committee Chair), Nick Cirino, Barry Cohen, Serene Forte, Bob Hawley, Betty Kupskay, Andrea Maki, Michele McKinney, Pat Olinger, Rosamond Rutledge-Burns (Past Chair), Deanna Robbins, Ellyn Segal, Heather Sheely, Elizabeth Smith, Curt Speaker, Guido Vogel, and Ken Yu. See you in Philadelphia!

Training and Education Committee

Anne-Marie Bakker, MS, Chair
Berlex Biosciences
Richmond, California

It has been an exciting and busy year so far for the Training and Education Committee (T&E). Two new programs have been initiated (i.e., "Principles and Practices of Biosafety"): a 40-hour training course and the ABSA Summer Series. This fall the T&E Committee will be presenting 20 preconference and two postconference courses at the national conference in Philadelphia. In addition to the course offerings, the committee will also be facilitating a Roundtable on Select Agent Compliance. The committee will once again be selecting the "Outstanding Means of Communication Citation."

Preconference Courses

The T&E Committee will be presenting 22 courses this year at the conference. Due to the large number of courses and the limited number of classrooms, two of the courses will be offered on Wednesday afternoon post conference. This is also an opportunity to evaluate this time slot as a viable alternative to only preconference courses. Course offerings are posted on the ABSA web site at www.ABSA.org.

Roundtable

This year the committee is coordinating the "Select Agents: Implementation of the New Regulation-Fine-tuning Your Program." This roundtable will include a quick overview of the requirements. Representatives from public institutions and industry will discuss how they approached the implementation of the new regulations. This is an opportunity for you to compare your program with that of your colleagues and to discuss compliance issues with the speakers and the audience. Confirmed speakers include Stephen A Morse, CDC, providing a quick review of the requirements; Phillip Hauck, Mt. Sinai School of Medicine, talking about implementation of the program at a large institution; and Barbara Fox-Nellis, University of Florida, reviewing recent CDC & USDA facility inspections for their Select agent program. We are still looking for a representative from the USDA and industry interested in sharing his or her experience in implementing the new program.

2003 Training Exhibit and the ABSA 2003 Outstanding Means of Communication Citation

The T&E Committee encourages you to participate in the Training Exhibit display at the ABSA Conference (www.absa.org/confsem.html) by sharing your original biosafety materials, such as newsletters, booklets, manuals, training handouts, videos, and books authored by biosafety professionals. Web, CD-ROM, and other electronic training materials are also welcome.

The Outstanding Means of Communication Citation was developed by the ABSA T&E Committee in conjunction with the ABSA Awards Committee (www.absa.org/abocommittees.html) to formally acknowledge high-impact and original

(noncommercial) training materials. Submitted items are judged for their effectiveness and creativity. All ABSA members are eligible for the Citation, which is presented at the ABSA Conference.

Principles and Practices of Biosafety

The inaugural presentation of the "Principles and Practices of Biosafety" course was conducted on June 15-19, 2003 at Berlex Biosciences in Richmond, California. The course was a sellout with 42 class participants. There were over 13 on the waiting list and many more interested in participating in next year's class.

The course went very well. The participants were very complimentary and said that if they hadn't known, they would have never thought that this was the first time the course had been presented. Also, all of the people who completed the overall evaluation form said that "YES," they would recommend the course to others.

I want to thank LouAnn and her subcommittee for their 2 years of hard work to develop and present a top-notch course. The subcommittee is already hard at work going through the evaluations and planning the 2004 course. The plan is to have the 2004 course location and date announced at the national conference.

Our efforts were clearly very much appreciated by the participants, and I think we can expect continued success with this course.

ABSA Summer Seminar Series

The first annual summer series was conducted on July 16-17, 2003 in San Francisco with three courses offered. The courses included "Biosafety Level 3: Laboratory Operations and Facility Design Considerations," taught by Dr. Robert Ellis; "Occupational Health Surveillance and Monitoring," with Dr. Gary Fugimoto; and "Laboratory Incident Investigation and Risk Management," with K. Patrick McKinney as the instructor. Over 73 people attended with many taking several of the courses. A special thanks goes to Michelle McKinney for her diligent work in making the seminar a reality. She was responsible for keeping the process moving forward and on track. The committee will be reviewing the evaluation forms and soliciting ideas for the 2004 summer seminar.