The International Biosafety Compendium: A Great Tool for Biosafety Professionals

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Throughout the years, biological safety officers and other safety professionals have relied on colleagues through networking as an informal channel for sharing biological safety principles, ideas and developments. These concepts have evolved with the evolution of disease and biological agents causing them, as well as emerging and re-emerging diseases. In a more formal way, there are conferences and key publications that have served as sources of information. Additional publications have also evolved with the emergence of new and re-emerging diseases and the understanding of their causative biological agents.

The American Biological Safety Association (ABSA) annual conference has been a major meeting place for the biological safety professionals through the years. Being able to attend these annual events has been an unequivocal educational experience in itself and a rich informational source by networking and informal discussions. The Biennial CDC Biosafety Symposium has also played an important role in the discussion of "hot" or relevant issues in biological safety. From containment to laboratory design, from *Mycobacterium tuberculosis* and Hantavirus to the safety of research with animals, it always has been in the forefront of the "latest news" in the field of biological safety.

As technology evolved, so have our methods for seeking information. The Biosafety community has greatly benefited from the BIOSAFTY list created by Richard Fink formerly from MIT. Richard developed an incredible and dynamic source of information accessible to everyone involved in the implementation of the Biosafety around the world.

However, a recurrent subject during informal conversations at ABSA conferences and other meetings in recent years was the need for a tool that would supplement the BMBL and the other information sources. The idea was to create a document that would compile information on biological safety, that could be used worldwide and that would be easily available.

During a meeting of the Long Range Planning Committee at the New Orleans ABSA conference, Deborah Hunt, then the current President of ABSA requested I initiate the process of creating an ABSA Biosafety compendium. A discussion followed on the characteristics of this document to address the need for access to international regulations, guidelines, etc. This was the birth of the Biosafety Compendium. During the following months, Maureen Best, ABSA President, was a strong advocate of this project and reiterated the need for the production of a tangible product. At this point, Esmeralda Prat volunteered to help in this endeavor. Maureen Best sought cooperation in developing the compendium from the International Biosafety Working Group (IBWG) members, as they are representatives from different countries and disciplines within Biosafety. In this way, the compendium evolved from being an ABSA Biosafety compendium into a truly International Biosafety Compendium by virtue of its contents and contributors.

Esmeralda Prat and I established the framework for this document. Ms. Prat took the basic summary of information from the United States, added the European community elements and the appropriate format. This dramatically increased the informative

value of the document. In the same time frame Lou-Ann Burnett and a team of ABSA members were designing the Principles and Practices of Biosafety course and wished to include the compendium as a reference document. Using the Biosafty list serve, Lou-Ann gathered additional information and reference material that was added to the growing Compendium. As a key person in Johnson & Johnson's International Program, Penny Holeman was able to contribute to unique areas of international information.

During the 2004 EBSA conference, the IBWG discussed how to make the Compendium and other information on the IBWG available to the biosafety community worldwide. EBSA offered to host an IBWG page on its web site at www.ebsa.be.

This document has been built through the efforts of many people and the authors, particularly Ms. Pratt, have compiled the information provided. The information may be searched either by country or by topic.

Currently information from the following countries is available in the Compendium: Argentina, Australia, Austria, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, España, EU, France, Germany, India, International, Italia, Russia, Switzerland, UK, and USA.

Regulations, Guidelines and Information Sources by Topic:

- Biosafety Manuals
- Books and Other Publications
- Microbiology
- Molecular Biology and Gene Transfer
- Cells, Body Fluids, BBP, TB and Occupational Health
- Disinfection and Biological Waste
- Emergency Response, Bioterrorism and Biosecurity
- Risk Assessment
- Biosafety Containment Facilities, Equipment, Practices and PPE
- Research Animals, Arthropods, Allergens
- Transfer, Transport, Import, Export of Biological Materials
- Biosafety Management
- Large Scale Production
- Indoor Air Quality
- Plants and Agriculture and Plant Made Pharmaceuticals

We feel this document is a very valuable source of information on regulations, guidelines and standards on biological safety around the world. By the nature of its contents, it is a very dynamic document that will change as the regulations and guidelines as well as the technical and practical aspects of biological safety evolve and as new sources of information become available. The responsibility for the progress of this document relies on its users, the biological safety professionals. Send new information and corrections to jairob@miami.edu or Esmeralda.Prat@bayercropscience.com. Biosafety professionals are the individuals that day to day are in the "trenches" of biomedical research activities trying to ensure proper containment and handling of potentially infectious biological agents to ascertain safety in the laboratory and in the environment. To you, we offer this *Biosafety Compendium on REGULATIONS, GUIDELINES and INFORMATION SOURCES.*