PRESIDENT'S PAGE

This year, I will celebrate my fifteenth anniversary as a biological safety professional. During this time, I have had the opportunity to work with many talented individuals to assure that work with biological agents is conducted safely. It is gratifying to be able to reflect on the advances of the past two decades and see the contribution of biological safety.

Foremost for me is the commercialization of products derived from recombinant DNA technology. In 1982, I worked for a company that was developing one of the first recombinant products to be approved by the Food and Drug Administration. At the time I became a biological safety officer, the NIH Guidelines for Research Involving a Recombinant DNA Molecules (NIH Guidelines) were merely five years old and there was still considerable concern about the safety of gene cloning. Using comprehensive risk assessment and analysis, the hazards were determined to be primarily those associated with the host organism. The concept of biological safety was introduced to describe an enfeebled organism having limited chances of survival outside of the facility. These scientific facts led to the development of containment guidelines that assure the safe handling of these agents. Paramount to me are the large scale guidelines, which were first introduced in 1980 and eventually incorporated as Appendix K. Today, two decades after the first version of the NIH Guidelines, millions of people are benefiting from pharmaceutical products of biotechnology. Application of the principles of biological safety has helped assure that research and manufacturing processes are conducted in a manner that protects both employees and the environment.

Another major accomplishment has been the publication of *Biosafety in Microbiological and Biomedical Laboratories* by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and National Institutes of Health. Now in its third edition, this document is recognized worldwide as the standard for preventing facility-acquired infections. The practices described in this book served as the basis for another significant milestone—the implementation of the Occupational Safety and Health Administration standard *Occupational Exposure to Bloodborne Pathogens*. Prompted by a fear of contracting AIDS from workplace exposure to infected individuals, this standard has had a profound impact on the transmission of all bloodborne diseases.

What does the future hold and where does biological safety fit in?

The AIDS epidemic has led to a resurgence in tuberculosis. Decades of antibiotic use have generated numerous strains of resistant organisms that cause serious disease. New infections are emerging as humans colonize previously uncharted areas of the globe. In the interest of public health, we will strive to identify and understand these agents and search for new therapies to eradicate them. Along the way, scientists will be at risk as they culture these agents and health care workers will be at risk as they care for infected patients. Application of the principles of biological safety will be crucial to assure victory in the war on infectious diseases and zero casualties along the way.

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