

NEWSLETTER

Medichem 2006 New Medichem Board

With the last Newsletter you received the call for candidates for this year's Medichem Board election. Thanks to all of you who answered, and also thanks for the helpful and encouraging comments which I received from many of you.

The following three Medichem members were nominated to the secretary and consented to stand as Board candidates (appearance ranked in alphabetical order by last name):

- 1) Prof. Dr. Jasminka Godnic-Cvar (Medical University of Vienna, Austria)
- 2) Dr. Peter Nmadu (NNPC Medical Center, Nigeria) and
- 3) Dr. Pierre Rouzaud (France, Centre Hospitalier Purpan).

As announced in the last Newsletter, Board Member Dr. Peter Nmadu arrived at the end of his term of office. Therefore one seat on the board was available for those candidate receiving the majority of votes. From the above mentioned candidates Prof. Dr. Jasminka Cvar received the majority of votes from you, and will therefore serve on the Board from October 2006.

According to Article 5 Sect. 4.1 of the Medichem Constitution, each Board member shall be from a different country. This rule does not apply for those holding the offices of

Chairman, Vice Chairman, Secretary, and Treasurer. Because I consented to continue as Medichem's secretary, Jasminka Cvar and myself, both from Austria, may be on the Board at the same time.

Doz. Dr. Robert Winker
(Vienna, Austria)



Minutes of the Medichem General Assembly June 13th, 2006, Milan

TOPIC 1: Approval of the agenda, additions, changes
The following additions to the meeting agenda were proposed and approved:

Topic 2a:

Upcoming congresses: Querétaro, The Netherlands, Taipei (proposal for 2010).

Topic 6a:

Future mini-symposia

Topic 11 (any other business):
Medichem's history and chronicle

TOPIC 2: Approval of the minutes of the last General Assembly Meeting

The minutes of the September Goa- General Assembly, were approved as written, with thanks to Michael Nasterlack.

November 2006



MEDICHEM - Occupational and Environmental Health in the Production and Use of Chemicals

Founded 1972 in Ludwigshafen, Germany

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Prof. K. Kono (Japan)
Dr. A.B. Kotzé (South Africa)
Prof. J.A. Morales (Mexico)
Dr. M. Nasterlack (Germany)
Prof. T. Popov (Bulgaria)
Dr. T. Rajgopal (India)
Dr. F.G. Rose (U.K.)
Dr. S.O. Salomon (Argentina)
Prof. F.W. Schmahl (Germany)
Dr. L.M. Yee (USA)

TOPIC 2a:

Upcoming congresses

2007: Querétaro:

Drs. Enríquez and Araujo were present to discuss further details of this meeting. The following decisions were made: Medichem Board Meeting Wednesday Sept. 12th, 2007. Joint congress with Fenastac Sept. 13th to 15th. The programme will be set up primarily with joint sessions in the mornings, including a joint opening ceremony. In the afternoons, the sessions which are more specific to the two organisations will be scheduled, e.g. the Medichem Prize session. An effort will be made to provide simultaneous translation (Spanish/English) at least for the joint morning sessions. Both organisations will participate in the same social programme. The finances will be managed through the same local organisation. It was suggested that Fenastac members might get a somewhat higher discount for their registration than Medichem members to offset higher administrative costs for foreign participants and for the congress budget to make a contribution to the costs of the publication of the proceedings.

Typical registration fees for Fenastac conferences have been less than USD 300. Stephen Borron and Andreas Flückiger have offered their assistance in discussing the details. Stephen Borron will formally become a member of the scientific committee of the conference, Andreas Flückiger offers to be the Medichem

contact for the organising committee.

2008: The Netherlands:

An organising committee has been set up and things are well under way. According to the latest information, Amsterdam appears to be the most likely venue. The exact dates remain to be announced.

2009: ICOH Cape Town:

The dates are March 23 to 27, 2009.

2010: Taiwan?

Jiin Ger presented the invitation of his home country and of the Taiwanese occupational health association for a joint conference with Medichem in 2010. As there are traditional dates for the local conference, the date is already fixed at this stage: April 24/25th, 2010. The conference normally draws 500 to 600 national participants and is always on a week-end, but on occasion of the joint meeting with Medichem, it could be extended by one or two days. The main language of the meeting will be English. The 2010 venue will be Taipei. The Assembly agreed to accept Taiwan's proposal for this conference. Jiin Ger will progress the preparations and would welcome Medichem's proposals for key topics in due time.

TOPIC 3: Chairman's report (submitted by Stephen W. Borron, MD, MS, Chairman)

I would like to extend my sincere regrets that I am unable to be with you for the ICOH Congress, the Medichem General Assembly, and the Medichem Mini-Symposium. I anticipate these activities will be rewarding for all and look forward to hearing of the successes of our members in the various activities surrounding the Congress.

The last year has been, I believe, a fruitful one for Medichem. In September 2005, we shared our most recent Medichem Congress in Goa, India. Our Indian colleagues, led by Drs. Thirumalai Rajgopal and Shrinivas Shanbhag, assured an excellent and well-attended scientific program, as well as very pleasant social functions accompanied by traditional music, delicious food and drink. Additionally, Medichem gained 12 new members from India. I extend my personal congratulations once again to the organizers for all their hard work and success and thank those who made the trek to Goa to participate.

In February 2006, Medichem Board members convened in Monterrey for an officer's meeting. Members had the opportunity to meet with local health officials to encourage their support for Monterrey as venue for the 2012 ICOH Congress. Dr. Jorge Morales organized a mini-symposium

for local occupational physicians, which was well attended. Medichem Board members provided brief presentations on issues of occupational safety, biological monitoring and emergency preparedness. The attendees expressed their appreciation for this mini-symposium and an interest in attending the 2007 Medichem / FENASTAC Congress in Queretaro, Mexico. At this officer's meeting, Medichem established a Medichem Young Investigator's Award, designed to sponsor participation of a young occupational or environmental health professional to attend a national occupational health meeting. Details of this award will be announced at the General Assembly.

Immediately prior to the ICOH Congress in Milan, Medichem co-sponsored Advanced Hazmat Life Support (AHLS) Provider and Instructor Courses in Rome, in conjunction with the Poison Center of the Catholic University of Rome. These courses teach a standardized approach to the medical management of acute exposures to potentially hazardous chemicals. In addition to being a financial co-sponsor, Medichem provided two instructors to the courses, Dr. Jorge Morales and myself. Through the generous assistance of BASF, provided by Dr. Andreas Zober, Medichem was able to sponsor attendance at the AHLS courses by 4 young professionals in occupational

medicine from developing nations. Dr. Vimesh Jani (2005 Medichem Prize winner) traveled from India, Dr. Shahin Shadnia came from Iran, and Dr. Suda Vannaprasaht and Miss Charuwan Sriapha joined us from Thailand. Each completed not only the Provider, but also the Instructor course and expressed hope to share the knowledge gleaned in this very useful course with other health professionals in their respective countries. The AHLS course was attended as well by Medichem member, Dr. Edwin Whiteside, who traveled from New Zealand to participate. Medichem was prominently promoted during the courses. Two new Medichem members were enrolled at the course and another dozen or so participants requested applications for membership.

I believe these activities of education which benefit occupational health care professionals in developing countries are among the most important actions that Medichem undertakes. Improving the level of occupational health education in areas where the production and use of chemicals is not only large but increasing is critical to reducing avoidable exposures and limiting the extent of injuries and illnesses when such exposures occur.

Continuing in this vein, Medichem has chosen Queretaro, Mexico for its 2007 Congress. The Medichem Congress will take place in

coordination with the FENASTAC National Congress. FENASTAC is the National Federation for Occupational Health in Mexico. The two Congresses will be tentatively joined by a shared day of activities. In addition, incentives will exist for attending both Congresses, including the availability of simultaneous Spanish-English and English-Spanish translations for all presentations. Mexico is an important producer and user of chemicals. This combined Congress will showcase Medichem in Mexico and hopefully attract new members.

It should also be mentioned that plans are well underway for the 2008 Medichem Congress in the Netherlands. ICOH will have its 2009 Congress in South Africa. Taiwan has proposed a 2010 Congress in Taipei, which is currently under strong consideration by the Board.

As my final year as Chairman of Medichem begins, I encourage each of you to think about how you can contribute further to the continued successes of Medichem. Valuable contributions may include service on the Board or as an officer, but also seeking out opportunities to share your knowledge with others, particularly with occupational and environmental health professionals in developing countries. It is critical that Medichem stabilize its membership. This will require recruiting activities by current

Medichem members and increased visibility by Medichem as an organization. My personal goal for this year is to maximize educational activities by Medichem by encouraging participation in our Congress by younger members in developing countries, and by taking education directly to developing countries through further sponsorship of lectures, mini-symposia, and standardized courses like AHLS.

Finally, I would like to express my heartfelt gratitude to our individual members for their continued interest and participation, to our Board Members and Officers for their spirit of voluntarism, and to our sustaining members, without whose help Medichem could not undertake its important functions.

TOPIC 4: Treasurer's report

Andreas Flückiger reported that with expenditures amounting to CHF 7,120.70 and revenues of CHF 50,354.05, the year ended with an increase of Medichem's assets of CHF 43,233.35. The significant increase in assets was mainly due to a EUR 10,000 donation made to Medichem by BASF, earmarked for use in the context of the 2006 ICOH conference in Milan. The credit balance on December 31st, 2005 was CHF 276,311.19 (USD 210,924.57 at the exchange rate on that

day). CHF 100,000 thereof remain in a certificate of deposit. The books were revised by Walter Urbatus and found to be in good order.

TOPIC 5: Secretary's report

Because of imminent professorial exams that were announced only very recently, Robert Winker was obliged to send his apologies. He submitted a written Secretary's report.

Since that last congress in Goa, Medichem has lost 9 members, and during the same time period gained 15 new members (most of them from India). A particular highlight of the past business year was the fact that Reliance Industries has become a new sustaining member, bringing 5 new individual members as well. As of May 31st, 2006, Medichem had 290 listed members from 41 countries, however, with several silent members. The Secretary and Treasurer have therefore decided to meet this coming summer for a clean-up of the membership list.

Since September 2005 the Secretary has issued two Newsletters. The Handbook was also updated. Costs for printing and distribution were borne as usual by BASF Aktiengesellschaft Ludwigshafen. Many thanks!

One Board Member, Peter Nmadu of Nigeria, arrives at the end of his term of office this year. He has agreed to

stand for re-election. Three other candidates have been nominated: Maroni (Italy), Cvar (Austria) and Rouzaud (France). The Secretary will conduct a written election process.

TOPIC 6: Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU) ACOEM/Medichem

Only 19 Medichem members have expressed interest in participating. Stephen Borron is exploring other possibilities of co-operation, e.g. in a group in which in which ACOEM, AAOHN (occupational health nurses) and several US government agencies (<http://ohden.sph.unc.edu/>) are involved

TOPIC 6a: Future mini-symposia

This topic is directly linked to the venue of the next mid-term meeting. Both Andreas Flückiger and Robert Winker have offered to host the next meeting in their home towns. On the other hand, it has recently become a tradition to hold the mid-term meeting in regions where Medichem is not so well established and to organize a mini-symposium on that occasion. Stephen Borron proposed to approach Croatia (Zagreb) and enquire whether they would be interested in hosting the business meeting and symposium. We have a small number of members in Croatia, but they are quite active. Michael Nasterlack will contact Martina Piasek (who will involve Marko Saric).

Proposed date: 12/13 January 2007.

TOPIC 7: Publication of Manuscripts of Medichem Congresses

The Assembly was informed, that the board agreed to accept the offer of the Indian Journal of Occupational and Environmental Medicine for publishing future Medichem congress proceedings. The first issue will contain the Goa conference contributions. No manuscripts have been collected at this stage, but Thirumalai Rajgopal will initiate this, now that the decision for publication has been made. Dr. Kulkarni, chief editor of the journal will get back to Stephen Borron with answers to the remaining open financial questions (e.g. costs for printing extra copies of the special issue), but the Board authorized Stephen Borron to decide on his own without further consultation. Speedy progress was deemed important. As far as sharing of the costs for publication goes, the traditional split of 60% for the Medichem chest and 40% for the local organizer will be maintained as a rule.

TOPIC 8: Medichem Young Investigators Award

The rules of this initiative have been established. It is now a matter of launching it and gaining experience with it. A trial period with three runs has been decided. Four national occupational health organisations will be approached to explore their

interest in running the programme: Taiwan (via JG), India (via TR), the US (via Stephen Borron and Tee Guidotti) and South Africa (via Michael Nasterlack and André Kotzé/Jo Barnes).

TOPIC 9: Young Professionals Programme

Up to USD 20,000 have been set aside to facilitate the participation of young professionals in Medichem congresses where they would present research previously put together under the mentorship of a Medichem designated professional. It was launched for the Goa conference, and only one person took advantage of it. The Board took this not as a failure of the programme but as a sign that further publicising is necessary. FR will put together a flyer to advertise the programme with a re-iteration of the rules. This flyer will be sent out with one of the next newsletters and is meant to be copied and distributed locally by Medichem members. Applications for the scheme are to be sent to Robert Winker.

TOPIC 10: Change of Medichem dues quotations from USD to EUR

As decided in the Monterrey meeting, Andreas Flückiger contacted most sustaining members to get their opinions on this change. Most of them would have no objections, but a few noted that changing a routine annual payment in any

way may attract the attention of internal controllers and might endanger the continuation of the payment. The Assembly therefore decided that the change from USD to EUR was not advisable at present: hidden rise in dues (“if we raise our dues, we should say so and give a reason”), no immediate financial need (currently solid financial reserves, which have been increasing), possible impression among US members that we are turning our backs on them. It was acknowledged however that the proposed currency change may become necessary at a later stage.

TOPIC 11: Medichem’s history and chronicle

Alfred Thiess has kept a fully illustrated history of Medichem since its foundation up until the most recent meetings and congresses. He would like to discuss the physical fate of these documents. Alfred Thiess also offered to continue maintaining the records up-to-date as long as he can. When this will no longer be possible, the Board will designate someone to ensure that this work will continue to be done.

The next General Assembly will be proposed for September, 2007 in Queretaro. Date and venue need to be confirmed.

Prof. Dr. Jasminka Godnic-Cvar
Doz. Dr. Robert Winker
(Vienna, Austria)
Dr. Andreas Flückiger
(Basel, Switzerland)

Blood lead recommendations 'outdated'

According to our data regulations for blood lead levels are outdated and need to be revised, after finding that even low concentrations may increase the risk of cardiovascular and all-cause mortality.

We found that blood lead levels as low as 0.10 $\mu\text{mol/l}$ (2 $\mu\text{g/dl}$), currently considered safe, were associated with an increased risk of overall mortality and an increased risk of mortality due to coronary heart disease and stroke. Because 38% of US adults had lead levels $>0.10 \mu\text{mol/l}$ in 1999 to 2002, the public health implications of these findings are substantial.

Andy Menke (Tulane University School of Medicine, New Orleans, Louisiana) and co-workers examined the health impact of blood lead levels below 0.48 $\mu\text{mol/l}$ - which occur in 99% of US adults - using information from the Third National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey.

Among 13,946 participants who were recruited in 1988 to 1994 and followed-up for mortality for up to 12 years, the mean blood lead level was 0.12 $\mu\text{mol/l}$.

After multivariate adjustment, individuals in the highest third of blood lead concentrations ($=0.17 \mu\text{mol/l}$) had a hazard

ratio of 1.25 for all-cause mortality and 1.55 for cardiovascular mortality compared with those in the lowest third of levels ($<0.09 \mu\text{mol/l}$).

Of note, blood lead was significantly associated with both myocardial infarction and stroke mortality, even at levels of $>0.1 \mu\text{mol/l}$. The association between blood lead levels and increased all-cause and cardiovascular mortality was observed at substantially lower blood lead levels than previously reported. Despite the marked decrease in blood lead levels over the past 3 decades, environmental lead exposures remain a significant determinant of cardiovascular mortality in the general population, constituting a major public health problem.

Practicable and cost-effective methods for reducing lead exposure in the general US population are needed. The full article can be downloaded from Circulation:

(<http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/reprint/114/13/1388>)

Paul Muntner, PhD
(New Orleans, USA)



Quality of Occupational History Assessments in Working Age Adults With Newly Diagnosed Asthma

As we reported in the August 2006 issue of CHEST, clinicians may fail to recognize and effectively manage occupational asthma in adults newly diagnosed with asthma. We analyzed the electronic medical records, pulmonary function test results, and questionnaire responses of 197 adults with newly diagnosed asthma at a California VA hospital.

All clinician notes were reviewed retrospectively beginning one year before the diagnosis of asthma and ending one year after the diagnosis date. The questionnaire was administered while patients waited to perform the pulmonary function test and included questions about past and current pulmonary history, respiratory symptoms, smoking history, and occupational exposures. We found that while over half of patients reported occupational exposure to respirable agents, cough, and dyspnea, only two percent received a diagnosis of occupational asthma and none was diagnosed with "work-related asthma".

Only one patient had action taken by a health-care provider to address occupational exposures.

Twenty-five percent of patient records included no mention of job title or employment status. The overwhelming majority of patient records included no details about job duties or exposures.

Ware G. Kuschner
(Palo Alto, USA)



Alfred M. Thiess celebrated his 85th anniversary

On October 3rd 2006 Medichem's founder and Honorary President Prof. Alfred M. Thiess celebrated his 85th birthday.

Born in Hermannstadt/Romania he came to Germany to study medicine in Frankfurt. In 1954 he joined BASF where he was head of the Occupational Medical Department from 1963 until his retirement in 1986. During this time he was one of the major drivers for the development of occupational medicine in Germany. He intensified the application of occupational epidemiology in an industrial setting and fostered health promotion not only in the sense of "one-time" campaigns but with a focus on subsequent evaluation of its success. Besides, he was a teacher at the Mannheim Medical Faculty of the University of Heidelberg, found the time to participate in numerous national and international expert groups and, not least, initiated Medichem in 1972.

In recognition of his achievements he received numerous awards, among which I want to point out the Franz Kölsch Medal. I will never forget how this very special event only took place after a significant delay. The bestowment ceremony during the annual Congress of Occupational Medicine in Wiesbaden/Germany had to be postponed by one year because of the intended recipient's personal unavailability. Fred Thiess had, as he had done every year since the fall of the iron curtain, organized a truck convoy to ship support goods to Romania, and it was more important to him to personally make sure that this convoy arrived at its destination than to receive the most prestigious token of recognition to be issued by the German Society of Occupational and Environmental Medicine (DGAUM). Consequently, in 2002 the city of his ancestors, Urwegen/Romania, bestowed on him the Honorary Citizenship in recognition of his untiring and generous support over many years.

Dear Fred Thiess, your Medichem family proudly congratulates you on your achievements in the past and wishes you the very best for the future. Keep your health and energy for many more years to the benefit of yourself, your dear wife Gisela, your family, and of course for the Medichem community.

Dr. Michael Nasterlack, Ludwigshafen
(Germany)



Medichem activities

Medichem will host a Mini-Symposium in connection with the next Mid-term meeting in Zagreb, Croatia.

The anticipated dates are January 11th and 12th, 2007 (Thursday and Friday).

The following presentations, mainly from lecturers of the Institute of Medical Research and Occupational Health in Zagreb so far have been selected:

-) Stephen Borron: "Introduction of Medichem"

-) Robert Winker: "Effect of occupational safety measures on micronucleus frequency in semiconductor workers"

-) Michael Nasterlack: "Ototoxicity of solvents"

-) Maja Peraica: "The aetiology of endemic nephropathy: role of ochratoxin A"

-) Vilim Zlender: "Expression of organic anion transporters in ochratoxin A nephrotoxicity"

-) Ivan Sabolic: "Expression of organic anion transporters in cadmium nephrotoxicity"

-) Veda M. Varnai: "Chelation therapy in human metal exposure"

-) Rajka Turk: "The role of Poison Control Centre in the prevention of poisoning in Croatia"

If you are interested to participate you may e-mail Dr. Martina Piasek (e-mail: mpiasek@imi.hr).

Dr. Martina Piasek
Prof. Dr. Marko Saric
(Zagreb, Croatia)



Forthcoming Events

This is a reminder for “Occupational Epidemiology and Risk Assessment: A seminar on science and occupational health decision-making” to be held in Frankfurt, Germany 14-16 November 2006.

The course will provide a concise summary of the key elements of practical epidemiology and quantitative risk assessment. These are the basic tools used in developing permissible occupational and environmental exposure limits, managing health risks associated with workplace hazards as well as consumer products, REACH and in litigation.

Co-hosted by P&G (Procter & Gamble) and ENVIRON International Corporation, the course will offer a combination of lectures, exercises and group discussions intended to provide occupational and environmental health professionals, regulators and corporate risk managers a forum for continuing practical education and exchange of

ideas on science-based decision-making.

This is an introductory course. An intermediate-level course is tentatively scheduled for 7-10 March 2007.

Kenneth Mundt, Ph.D
(USA)



A meeting on **Occupational Health and Safety in Nanotechnology**, will be held 4th-7th December 2006. The program includes speakers from industries working with nanomaterials, and researchers who are studying the toxicology of nanoparticles as well as the effectiveness of monitoring and personal protection equipment.

A more finalized version of the conference program is available at:

http://www.uc.edu/noehs/conference_program.asp.

The conference will feature an Industry Forum, which will highlight participants' perspectives on the risk management process for nanomaterial. Conference participants will be encouraged to share the issues that face companies that utilize and manufacture nanomaterials, as well as solutions – from all industry sectors.

Diane Mundt, PhD
(Amherst, USA)



Querétaro/Mexico congress 2007

As stated in the last newsletter the next Medichem congress will be organized together with Fenastac (Mexican Association of Occupational Medicine). The Fenastac-Medichem-congress will be held from the 13-15th of September 2007 in Querétaro/Mexico. Soon more detailed information about this congress should be available on the Medichem-homepage.



Welcome to New Members

Dr. **Karlheinz Guldner**,
Technical Inspectorate
Berufsgenossenschaft der
keramischen und Glas-
Industrie (Germany),
Dr. **Shahin Shadnia**,
Loghman-Hakim Hospital
Poison Center (Iran)

