



MED-VET-NET NEWS

Volume 2, Issue 11

November 2005

This month's newsletter gives an overview of the training opportunities available to Med-Vet-Net partners and their scientists.

The Project management office updates us on numerous issues including the Med-Vet-Net website, JPA2 and the 2006 annual scientific meeting in Malta.

We have an update on the second half of the science communication internship including news of the EC Communicating European Research Conference (CER 2005) in Brussels.

Communications Unit

TRAINING UPDATE

Med-Vet-Net is now close to embarking upon the second joint programme of activities (JPA2) and we will continue to encourage all aspects of Training. Development of research skills and expertise is a central objective of Med-Vet-Net and commitment for Med-Vet-Net Partners. This personal development will be encouraged for scientists at all levels with the following objectives:

- Raising the general level of scientific research and management competence
- Enhancing specialist scientific capabilities
- Ensuring the continuous professional development of key scientists and managers
- Developing young scientists for succession planning
- Recruiting and maintaining staff of high calibre by offering posts with an international context
- Improving links with academic institutes

The responsibility of this network integration activity will be undertaken by a Training Subcommittee of the Co-ordination Forum and therefore will have delegated authority to implement agreed training strategies. There are three main personal development opportunities offered throughout the life of the project to network scientists.

Training courses

To develop research and surveillance capacity to the highest attainable level particularly for the investigation and detection of, and response to, microbial food safety hazards in national reference laboratories throughout the European Union.

Workshops

To establish and strengthen interdisciplinary communications e.g. between veterinary and public health laboratories, epidemiologists and microbiologists, diagnostic and research scientists, government and industry, regulatory authorities and reference laboratories.

Short term missions

To support and enable the mobility of individual scientists to facilitate exchange of scientific knowledge and technology transfer and enhance awareness of the international context of Med-Vet-Net. Throughout JPA2, there will be a drive for recruitment via improved publicity and personal contacts.

In addition, the training programme will aim to:

- Improve links with academic institutes

To encourage the improvement of undergraduate and postgraduate human and veterinary public health education

- Develop specific programmes for opportunities for PhD students

During JPA2, three students in Workpackages will be funded for 50% of their costs. Procedures will be put in place to ensure appropriate postgraduate experience in the European environment.

SHORT TERM MISSIONS

A number of Short Term Missions are either planned or have been completed. Below is a summary of the reports obtained from a selection of the short term missions that have taken place up to now.

REPORT 1

Molecular detection and typing of *Cryptosporidium* spp.

Between 14 - 18 February 2005, Dr Alessan-

dro Broglia, scientist at the Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (BfR), Germany visited the Department of Infectious, Parasitic and Immunomediated Diseases, Istituto Superiore di Sanità - ISS, Rome, Italy. The supervisor of this mission was Dr. Simone M. Cacciò.

Aim of the Visit

The aim of this short visit was the exchange of protocols and ideas about molecular detection and genotyping of *Cryptosporidium* spp. in order to establish molecular typing protocol for cryptosporidiosis at BfR.

This is in harmony with the overall objective of the Workpackage 12 CryptNet which is to implement the detection and identification of *Cryptosporidium* oocysts through harmonisation and standardisation of methods at the pan-European level.

Activity Plan

Day 1 - DNA extraction techniques of *Cryptosporidium* spp.

Day 2 - Polymerase Chain Reaction (PCR) techniques for detection of *Cryptosporidium* spp.

Day 3 - Restriction Fragment Length Polymorphism (RFLP) techniques for genotyping of *Cryptosporidium* spp.

Day 4 - Sequence analysis: interpreting results and related software tools

Day 5 - Reference material

The following was handed over to the visitor as reference material

- Faecal sample from *C. parvum*-experimentally infected calf
- *C. parvum* DNA extracted from the same faecal sample
- Faecal sample from human patient infected with *C. hominis*
- Seven different primer pairs for 50 reactions.

Results

Thanks to this short training, a molecular typing protocol for cryptosporidiosis could be set up at BfR, one of the Partner Institutes of the Med-Vet-Net Project. Many samples, mainly faecal samples from calves, have been collected from regions of Germany and from Switzerland, and these used to set up a PCR-RFLP protocol successfully. These samples could constitute a good start point



Training and discussions promote collaboration

to create a German repository of reference material for the diagnosis of *Cryptosporidium* infection of humans and animals.

Conclusions

Sharing experiences and creating discussion with researchers directly, practising under their supervision and receiving important advice in the laboratory is invaluable and should be encouraged in future Med-Vet-Net partners.

Acknowledgements

Dr. Broglia gratefully acknowledges:

- The financial support obtained from the Med-Vet-Net project (Workpackage 2A)
- All the staff at the Department of Infectious, Parasitic and Immunomediated Diseases, Istituto Superiore di Sanità, Rome, Italy, in particular Dr. Simone Caccio for his invaluable collaboration and advice.

REPORT 2

Dose-response modelling in the framework of microbial risk assessment

Between 1 - 4 November 2005, Elke Stellbrink of Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (BfR), Germany visited the RIVM, Netherlands under the supervision of Dr Arie Havelaar.

Aim of the Visit

RIVM is one of the leading research institutes in the field of dose-response modelling in the framework of microbial risk assessment. The purpose of the visit was to learn more about different approaches and to discuss advantages and disadvantages of the different assumptions and models. Another aim was to learn more about the integration of economical aspects in the risk assessment process.

Activity Plan

This exchange visit presented the opportunity for discussion of many aspects of dose-response modelling in the framework of quantitative microbial risk assessment with several researchers through face to face communication.

Day 1

Discussion of the exposure assessment approach of the RIVM's CARMA project on *Campylobacter* risk assessment, development and composition of databases, mechanistic doses-response modelling approach for *B. cereus*, priority setting and cost of illness and priority of pathogenic microorganism in food.

Day 2

Discussion of the methods used to assess the disease burden of zoonotic pathogens which is expressed in Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALYs).

Presentation on "Dose-response models and their implications for quantitative microbial risk assessment for *Campylobacter* infections". Teleconference between Arie Havelaar and the planning committee for the EU/US conference which is planned for Workpackages 23 and 28.

Day 3

Discussion on dose-response modelling for human data, dose-response modelling with animal data, how dose-response models are

used in QMRA for food chain criteria.

Day 4

Discussion on the results of the Dutch project on microbial risk and consumer behaviour for *Campylobacter* and *B. cereus*.

Acknowledgements

The opportunity to participate in the Med-Vet-Net scientific exchange programme was very valuable.

Thanks go to:

- The financial support obtained from the Med Vet Net project (WP2A);
- All the staff at the RIVM, especially Arie Havelaar

REPORT 3

Risk Assessment for *Campylobacter*

Between 6 - 8 April 2005, Dr Maarten Nauta and Dr Aarieke de Jong of RIVM visited the Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (BfR), Germany.

Day 1

Participation in the meeting on "Quantitative risk assessment for human *Campylobacter* infections by broiler meat consumption" of the BMBF Network "Epidemiologie de Lebensmittelinfektionen". This meeting was organised to present the results of the project on *Campylobacter* Risk assessment in Germany, which ended in July 2005. In the afternoon Maarten Nauta presented some of the results of the Dutch CARMA project, which deals with the same topic, but also includes the farm and processing stages, and includes an analysis of costs and an evaluation of interventions. Aarieke de Jong presented the preliminary results of the project on Food: microbial risks, consumer behaviour and the potentials for positive health interventions. The Dutch experience was useful in the discussion on the perspectives of future risk assessment research in Germany.

Day 2

Discussion to compare the modelling approaches in more detail. This visit provided a good opportunity to exchange models, ideas and research plans. The discussions on dose response modelling were helpful for all. There is no generally acceptable dose-response model for *Campylobacter* yet, as the appropriate data are missing. However, conclusions on the selection of risk mitigation strategies may be robust for many dose response relations. The need for more quantitative data on *Campylobacter* contamination throughout the food chain, and more research aimed at consumer behaviour in the domestic kitchen was acknowledged by all.

For the full reports from each participant, members of Med-Vet-Net can visit <https://www.medvetnet.org/membersite/templates/doc.php?id=38>



ADMIN BUREAU UPDATE

Annual Reports and JPA2

The final document containing the annual scientific and financial reports was sent to the EC on 10 November. This report package comprises scientific and financial reports of the first year of activity and the scientific and financial planning of activities of the second Joint Programme of Activities (JPA2), as well as form C and audit certificates from partners. The Commission now has until the end of December to consider these documents and present their comments. The Commission will give a ruling on the assessment of our achievements and will validate the new commissioned Workpackages. Any concerns generated by our reports will be highlighted and further explanations requested. Only when all reports have been validated by the EC will they make the second payment to the Co-ordinator.

Unspent funds from JPA1

As explained at the last Co-ordinating Forum and Governing Board meetings, the Co-ordinator requested agreement from the EC that unspent funds from the first reporting period are reallocated to JPA2. The Co-ordinator's Representative and Administration Bureau are maintaining close contact with the EC Liaison and Financial Officers.

Sustainability of the Network

A Consultancy Company in legal affairs has been appointed following a European call for tender. The objectives of this exercise are to consider sustainability of the network with a view to Med-Vet-Net becoming a legal entity. The chosen company is SANTEXCEL, based in Lille in Northern France. This organisation has a background in the medical profession where it supports the legal, training and technical needs of health and social economic stakeholders. They are Europe-oriented – they have developed close collaborations with the Free University of Brussels and have preliminary contacts with the NHS in the UK. A kick-off meeting with the appointed team and the Co-ordinator's Representative will take place on 1 December 2005 at AFSSA. Results from this study will be available at the end of January 2006 and will be presented to the Co-ordinating Forum and the Governing Board for consideration and discussion at their next meeting in March 2006.

Admin Bureau

PROJECT MANAGEMENT

The successes of our first year

After several weeks of burning the midnight oil, Diane Newell and Claire Cassar from the Project Management Team in collaboration with Teresa Belcher of the Communications Unit, successfully submitted the First Year Scientific Annual Report to the EC on 1 November 2005. The document has now been submitted for refereeing and we expect the EC's response in mid December. This document, in a magazine format and containing many colourful figures, has been placed on the private website (under Reports and Planning) and we would appreciate any feedback – particularly nice comments - after such a lot of hard work (see on this page for how to get into the private website!)

The challenges of the next 18 months

Our second task over the last month was to complete and submit the Plans for the Second Joint Programme of Activities (JPA2), which runs from September 2005 to February 2007. This mammoth document (over 140 pages) was submitted to the EC on 4 November (very appropriately Firework Day in the UK!) and forms part of the requirements for determining our budget for the next year. This document has also been placed on the private website and any comments or corrections will be welcomed.

Working together

A joint meeting between the Workpackage Leaders of WP1, 2 and 3 is planned for 14 December 2005. The main aim will be to discuss the production of the scientific and annual reports and Joint Activities Plans. If you have any comments on the procedures employed or

suggestions to improve this process please let us know. This is important for Research Workpackage Leaders, many of whom will be writing final reports in February 2006.

Googling for success

The Project Management Team and Communications Unit recently held a joint meeting. One of the issues raised was the use of the website for dissemination of information to the general public. Clearly being high on the list in a Google or Yahoo Search for keywords like zoonoses is important for network profile. At the moment we are not even on the first few pages! One way to do this is ensure that all relevant webpages we have involvement with, have a link to www.medvetnet.org. Any other suggestions you have to improve this situation would be very welcomed. Please also remember that the website is updated most days so please put it on your favourites list and visit it at least once a week.

It's your "Chat Room"

A second issue for this joint meeting was the development of the Discussion Forum on the private website. These have been set up to encourage password-protected general communication within the network. Unfortunately, this electronic communication facility has been very under-used. Recently some of the Thematic Groups, trying to develop their Strategies and state of art reviews, have been using these web-pages, but the response has been poor. Hopefully virtual groups dedicated to special interests will start to use this in the future. Please "drop in" on these discussion pages when you can and make your opinions known.

THE MED-VET-NET INTERNAL WEBSITE

We have had a number of queries about accessing the Med-Vet-Net internal / private website. To reach this site go to: <https://www.medvetnet.org/membersite/>. You will then be prompted to log on with a username and password which can be obtained from your Med-Vet-Net Institute Representative.

Heading for the sunshine next year?

This week snow started to descend over northern Europe. Given this cold spell, we can be forgiven of dreaming of sunshine and Mediterranean warmth. So confirmation that the next Med-Vet-Net Annual Meeting will be 3 - 6 May 2006 in Malta may be very welcomed to you. Once again keep an eye on the website for further information. There will be 100 free places for Med-Vet-Net delegates and a further 100 places for paying guests. This year our focus will on outputs from our collaborative Workpackages. So put these dates in your diary now – and possibly think about a few extra days to enjoy a well-earned rest in the spring sunshine!

Spreading our wings

The first of our Med-Vet-Net associated projects (EUUS-SAFEFOOD) started on 1 November 2005. This project aims to develop a transatlantic alliance between European and North American researchers on food microbiology issues. The project is co-ordinated by the VLA and includes DFVF, ASG, UCM, SfAM and AFSSA as well as bringing in a new institute from Czech Republic (CZ) as European partners. Our first joint meeting will be in West Virginia 27 - 29 November and the report of this will appear in the next newsletter.

Finally we are crossing our fingers in a good luck gesture to two additional projects under consideration for funding this month. The first

is LAEU-Foodnet submitted by ASG as a Specific Support Action of FP6. This project aims to link Latin America with Europe on issues of food safety. The second project is submitted to the Wellcome Trust by SfAM and aims to generate up to ten videos on zoonoses topics for web distribution to the general public.

Targeting important stakeholders

Finally we were pleased to be invited to contribute to the joint publication on zoonoses between the British Medical Journal and the Veterinary Record. Our manuscript entitled 'Crossing the Boundaries' was published on 26 November 2005 and highlights to one of our stakeholder groups - our medical and veterinary colleagues - our aims and objectives as well as our successes to date and our challenges for the future.

Diane Newell

Med-Vet-Net - Microsoft Internet Explorer

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Search the Web Search Address <https://www.medvetnet.org/membersite/> Go

MED-VET-NET Welcome to the partner workplace for the virtual institute of Med-Vet-Net!

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- 2005-11-23 Planning & reporting

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Next: 2005-12-06

Discussion Forum

FINAL STRATEGY FOR RISK RESEARCH THEME

Document Archive

Bulletin Board

NEW Med-Vet-Net Training workshops
- Microbial Risk Assessment, 1-3 February 2006, RIVM, The Netherlands
- Salmonella contol in poultry, from feed to farm, 13-17 March 2006, Uppsala, Sweden (open also to a limited number of external participants)

NEW Annual Report Year 1 (pdf-5MB)
Submitted to the EC 1 November 2005. Please note that this is a draft document that may be updated at the request of the EC. Therefore, please treat **confidentially** until informed otherwise.

NEW JPA2 Proposal (pdf-1MB)
Submitted to the EC 4 November 2005. Please note that this is a draft document that may be updated at the request of the EC. Therefore, please treat **confidentially** until informed otherwise.

Using the Discussion Forums
The Discussion Forums are an extremely useful tool to enable groups to work better together, share

Workpackages

Epidemiology

- PulseNet Europe
- Molecular Epidemiology of European Bat Lyssaviruses
- GIS

Host-Microbe Interaction

- Pathogenesis of verocytotoxin
- Molecular markers for *Campylobacter jejuni*

Detection and control

- Emerging resistance to beta-lactam
- Foodborne pathogens
- TRICHINET
- CrypNet

Risk Research

- Integrating risk assessment
- Pre-harvest Microbiological Risk Assessment

All suggestions for improvements to the Med-Vet-Net website are welcome

TRAINING: CALL FOR PROPOSALS

We invite you to submit proposals for training courses with the objective of disseminating information and technical competences between Med-Vet-Net partners. The proposal should ideally contain:

- 1) learning objectives
- 2) participants profiles
- 3) selection criteria
- 4) programme
- 5) budget
- 6) dates and venue
- 7) plan for making training material available on the Med-Vet-Net website
- 8) plan for continued training or networking

If you only have time to put down a title at this stage, don't let that keep you from submitting a proposal. We will work with you to develop a more comprehensive plan later. Please send your proposal to Yvonne Agersø [ya@dfvf.dk] or Henrik Wegener [hwc@dfvf.dk] before **15 December 2005**.

EXTERNAL CONGRESS

**Epidemiology and Vaccines
SfAM Winter Meeting, The Royal Society,
Carlton House Terrace, London, UK
5 January 2006**

This one day meeting includes a variety of aspects of vaccine use and epidemiology; from MMR to Bioterrorism vaccines. A plenary session, including a presentation on avian flu will be followed by two parallel sessions;
A. Postcodes to Pandemics - including TB vaccines and the effects of climate change
B. Current Vaccine issues - including MMR and Bioterrorism vaccines
Further information and online booking are available at www.sfam.org.uk/janmeet.html or email: meetings@sfam.org.uk

a one day meeting on
**Epidemiology
and Vaccines**
5 January 2006



**The International Conference on Emerging
Infectious Diseases, Atlanta, Georgia, USA
19 - 22 March 2006**

The International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases will be held at the Marriott Marquis Hotel. The Conference brings together public health professionals to encourage the exchange of scientific and public health information on global emerging infectious disease issues. Major topics include current work on surveillance, epidemiology, research, communication and training, bioterrorism, and prevention and control of emerging infectious diseases, both in the United States and abroad. ICEID2006 would be a great opportunity

SCIENCE COMMUNICATION INTERNSHIP UPDATE

The interns are now over nine weeks through the Science Communication Internship. The last few weeks of the course have seen the interns and Communication Unit attending the EC conference on 'Communicating European Research' (CER 2005). Our own Communications Director, Teresa Belcher presented to delegates - along with the communication managers of other EU-funded networks - on the role of communications. This presentation led to much excited discussion, particularly with respect to sustainability and funding. The remainder of the conference was incredibly useful for the interns to practice their networking skills and to learn about a variety of communication skills from writing for the media and general public, to developing an external communications strategy. For reports and presentations from this conference please visit http://europa.eu.int/comm/research/conferences/2005/cer2005/index_en.html

The interns have also visited Blackwells Publishing, where they learnt about the complex issues involved in Open Access Publishing. It was interesting to find out about all the processes involved in the publication of peer-reviewed papers. Did you know that it's not uncommon for publishing companies to send their scripts to India, China or South-East Asia for typesetting!

The commercialisation of scientific research was the topic of a trip to Oxford where we all visited the Oxford University based spin-out company OXITEC and their supporting venture capitalists Oxford Capital Partners.

Visits to BBC World service and the BBC TV studios are planned for the final few weeks together with a trip to Technquest, a science museum in Cardiff which will introduce the interns to the communication of science at grass roots level - to the public and school children.

Lucy Harper

nity to share your research with the scientific community. Please visit <http://www.iceid.org>
**International Symposium on Emerging
Zoonoses, Atlanta, Georgia, USA
22 - 24 March 2006**

This Symposium is being held in conjunction with the 2006 International Conference on Emerging Infectious Diseases (see above). The Symposium is organized by Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the World Organisation for Animal Health (OIE) and managed by the American Society for Microbiology (ASM).

As public health and animal health organisations attempt to respond to a new era of emerging and re-emerging zoonotic diseases, their ability and skill in forming new strategic partnerships will be paramount. Episodes of emerging zoonoses are being increasingly recognised around the world and the confluence of people, animals and animal products today is unprecedented. This Symposium will bring together public health and animal health professionals to strengthen the development of effective and co-operative partnerships to face of new microbial threats.

The program will include plenary sessions with 40 invited speakers from around the world. Major themes of the Symposium include:

- The Convergence of Human and Animal Health
- Threats and Challenges Facing Human and Animal Health
- Lessons Learned from Past
- Opportunities for the Future
- Risk Management and Communication

For more information please visit: <http://www.isezconference.org/>

**4th International Veterinary Vaccines and
Diagnostics Conference (IVVDC)
Oslo, Norway
25 - 29 June 2006**

The conference provides an excellent opportunity

to meet colleagues and be updated on recent progress and future perspectives in the fields of vaccinology and diagnostics.

The IVVDC has become an important meeting place for regulatory authorities, pharmaceutical companies and the scientific community. An exciting scientific program has been prepared covering the various areas of vaccinology and diagnostics. Please visit: http://www.vetinst.no/inet_eng/index.asp?strUrl=1002147i&topExpand=&subExpand=



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**Contributions and suggestions
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