



MED • VET • NET NEWS

Volume 1, Issue 1

November 2004

Hello, and welcome to the first official edition of Med-Vet-Net News. Med-Vet-Net has now been underway since 1 September, and initial meetings between the institutes and scientists have already taken place.

This monthly newsletter aims to keep the network and interested parties up-to-date with the news, scientific progress, past and upcoming events, and various other communications within the Network.

Contributions and ideas are most welcome.

I look forward to working together with you all on this exciting project!

Teresa Belcher
Med-Vet-Net Communications Director

OVERVIEW: MED-VET-NET

Med-Vet-Net was officially launched on 1 September 2004. Comprising of 16 European partners and over 300 scientists from multiple disciplines, Med-Vet-Net will provide the appropriate environment for these scientists to share and enhance their knowledge and skills, develop collaborative projects and present joint research within and outside the network.

Why zoonoses research?

The European Union (EU) recently identified 23 zoonotic agents which must be monitored by member states in both human and animal populations. Traditionally, research on zoonotic agents in Europe has been highly fragmented, and so, in order to address this, the EU 6th Framework Program has provided financial support for five years to develop a Network of Excellence for the Integrated Research on the Prevention and Control of Zoonoses.

Diseases transmissible from animals to humans (zoonoses) are the cause of many of our serious public health problems. In fact, nearly two thirds of all known human pathogens are zoonotic. Zoonoses have always represented a risk to humans, but recent events such as Severe Acute Respiratory Syndrome (SARS), have demonstrated that these risks are increasing and have the potential for serious global consequences.

These changing risks are due to increasing global travel, changes in livestock production and trade, growing contact between man and exotic animals, as well as shifts in human eating and food preparation habits. At the same time, human populations are becoming more susceptible while the organisms themselves are mutating and becoming more virulent, and developing new transmission routes.

Food supply is an increasingly global industry and because many zoonotic agents are food-borne or have reservoirs in livestock, the microbiological safety of food is now recognised as a major public health concern for the EU.

Integration activities

Med-Vet-Net is structured into three integration activities and four joint scientific activities (thematic areas).

The Integration activities comprise of:

• 'Virtual Institute' (Workpackage 1) – coordinated by the French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA), and is headed by Dr Andre Jestin. This workpackage aims to develop an effective management structure with administrative procedures, processes, reporting and review to enable the smooth running of the Network.

• 'Strategic Scientific Integration' (Workpackage 2) – lead by Professor Diane Newell of the Veterinary Laboratory Agency (VLA). This area will provide the platform for the coordination and integration of scientific skills and expertise throughout the Network.

• 'Spreading Excellence' (Workpackage 3) – is the responsibility of the Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM), under the guidance of Dr Peter Silley. This involves 'spreading the excellence of knowledge' both within the Network as well as externally. This includes the formation of a Communications Unit who

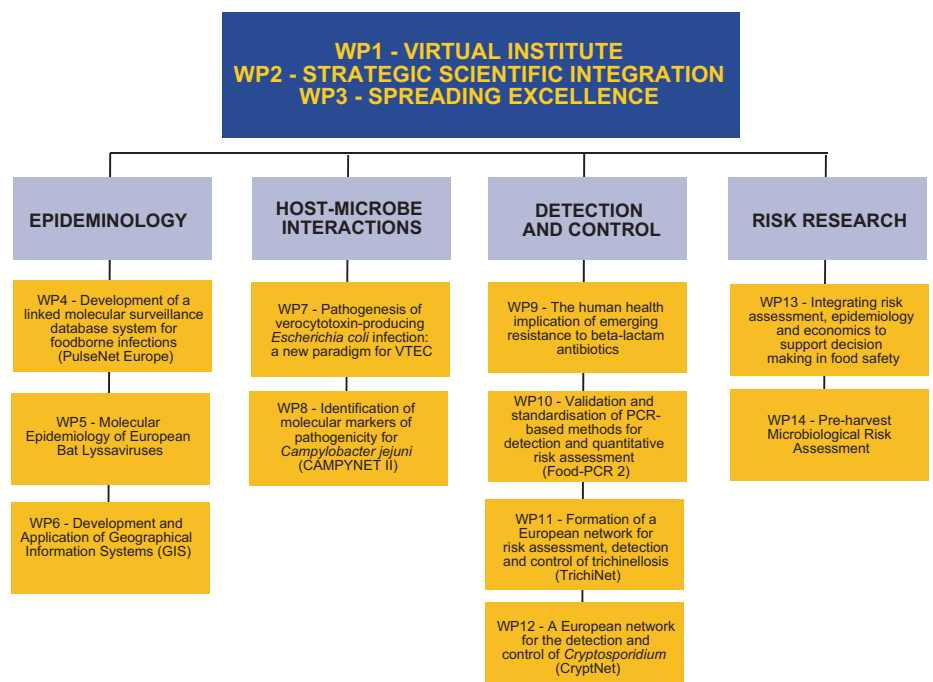
will work on an internal website for scientists to share news, achievements, and reports; an external website with information for the public and other stakeholders; a monthly newsletter; fact sheets on zoonoses; and stories on the Network's research. Strategies for advising our various stakeholders (politicians, media journalists, consumers, general public) about Med-Vet-Net will also be developed, and a training and development program for 'Scientific Communicators' within each Institute will be established.

Scientific Activities

The Scientific Activities comprise the experts appointed by each Partner institute. There are four thematic areas which will be active throughout the life of the project:

- Epidemiology
- Host-Microbe Interactions
- Detection & Control
- Risk Research

These then comprise research topics which are timely, developing and contribute to the overall research capacity of the network. Workpackages are formed within these thematic areas and will run initially for 18 months. The current workpackages are outline in the diagram below.



ADMIN BUREAU UPDATE



*Dr Andre Jestin,
Coordinator's
Representative*

Network financial management

The summer period was dedicated to the drafting and signing of the 14 Workpackage Contracts from all participating partners. It involved obtaining approximately 150 signatures. The grant arrived last week in the Afssa Bank account. The Administration Bureau is now proceeding with the wire-transfer administrative formalities.

Kick-off meeting – 21/22 of September in Utrecht

The Kick-off meeting was jointly prepared by RIVM in The Netherlands and the Administration Bureau. The meeting combined a Governing Board, Co-ordinating Forum and Advisory Panel meeting. Extra-curricular activities organised by RIVM included a visit to a musical box museum as well as a dinner at a restaurant in a historical building. Thanks to these very well organised events, a good atmosphere amongst participants was established which allowed the work of the Network to start with a strong commitment from all.

SCIENTIFIC UPDATE



*Prof. Diane Newell,
Project Manager*

Strategic Scientific Integration

The Strategic Scientific Integration of Med-Vet-Net is implemented within Workpackage 2 led by Diane Newell. This WP undertakes the development and monitoring of the joint scientific research, training and continuous professional development, internal network communications and network external collaborations.

Meeting of Thematic Representatives

The joint scientific programme for Med-Vet-Net started well with a meeting of the Thematic Representatives (see recent events) from all the partners to review the current status of research in the four Thematic Areas: Epidemiology, Host-Microbe Interaction, Detection and Control and Risk Research. On the basis of this information, a plan will be developed for the scientific direction of the Network and this plan will dictate the scientific workpackages to be funded in the future. This plan has to be in place soon so that the next joint programme of activities can be presented to the EC in the Annual Report next September. Therefore, two more meetings (probably in Italy and Sweden) are anticipated in the next few months to complete this.

The minutes of these three meetings will be published on the Med-Vet-Net internal website as soon as they are reviewed and validated by the participants.

Budget flexibility

Following several requests from Workpackage leaders about the use of the budget, the Administration Bureau has been asked to define and propose procedures that will allow flexibility in the budget, thus enabling optimal functioning of the Network. A first procedure, permitting the movement of money between lines of the same Workpackage in the same Institute has been submitted and was agreed upon by the partners during the Kick-off meeting. A second procedure allowing the adjustment of the travel and subsistence budget line is currently being prepared and will be soon sent to the partners for validation.

Videoconference

As part of the remit of Workpackage 1, a study for implementing videoconferencing systems within the Network has commenced. It is possible that Med-Vet-Net could benefit from various existing funding opportunities. These include an EFSA project applying only to the National food safety agencies, a Specific Support Action programme that the Administration Bureau would need to write a proposal for, applying to all Med-Vet-Net partner Institutes, as well as Med-Vet-Net proper funds. In order to assess these opportunities, a meeting to co-ordinate all efforts within the Network is planned for 1 December DFVF in Copenhagen, Denmark.

The Thematic Representatives Meeting raised many important issues including:

- The requirement for Risk Research to determine the overall research direction
 - The breadth and prioritization of zoonotic disease agents to be dealt with
 - The need for training in key areas like Epidemiology and Risk Research
 - The overlap across all Thematic Areas and the need for integration of these
 - The complexity of Host-Microbe Interactions and the general lack of a clear common understanding of the underpinning nature of such fundamental research
- These issues are now being addressed within the various Thematic Groups and will form the basis of future meetings.

Training Program

The training programme has also started well with a management sub-committee elected, chaired by Henrik Wegener (DFVF). The first call for proposed workshop topics has been made and a large number of proposals received. The mechanisms for exchange visits are currently being developed so keep an eye on the website.

External Network Collaboration

Major progress has been made in developing external network collaborations. Such collaborations will extend our influence and expertise worldwide and offer opportunities for joint projects and scientific exchanges. Over the next few months we will expand these external contacts further and keep you informed but one of the first collaborations was in response to a direct contact from a similar Australian network.

Contact lists

In collaboration with Workpackage 3, a contact list of all participants in Med-Vet-Net will soon be published on the private website. With specific access rights, each member will be able to have access to their own form in order to update it when necessary.

Visit of the Communications Director at the AFSSA

Teresa Belcher, the newly-appointed Med-Vet-Net Communications Director, based at SfAM, visited AFSSA Head Quarters and met the Co-ordinator's Representative, the Administration Bureau, the legal unit and the Communication Officers on 19th October. It was a good opportunity to introduce ourselves, to present our work and duties, to share information, co-ordinate our respective actions and to enhance collaboration between Workpackage 1 and Workpackage 3.

The Admin Bureau staff (l..r): Foulo Basse, Maya Goepfert, Arnaud Callegari



Australian Collaboration

The Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Centre for Emerging Infectious Diseases (AB-CRC) was established in 2003 to build national capacity for prevention, preparedness and response to emerging infectious disease threats such as foot-&-mouth disease, avian influenza, SARS and other potential disease emergencies.

This is a very similar network to Med-Vet-Net and we have been in touch with key people to discuss potential collaboration.

The AB-CRC has three integrated programs:

- Research Program - To develop more cost effective tools and systems for disease detection and surveillance, and to expand our knowledge of the potential for emerging disease threats to establish and spread within Australia.
- Application & Linkage Program - To transfer knowledge and technologies to the livestock, animal health, public health, environmental and community sectors. To exploit the commercial potential of tools and systems for disease detection and surveillance, and education and training products.
- Education & Training Program - To equip researchers, professionals and members of the community within Australia and the Asia-Pacific region with appropriate knowledge and skills for responding to emerging infectious disease threats, in accordance with community and industry needs and expectations. For more information, visit the AB-CRC website: <http://www.abcrc.org.au/>

PEOPLE NEWS



Peter Boriello:
Chairperson
Governing Board

Peter Boriello is a microbiology graduate and Fellow of University College London. He has been Head of a Medical Research Council Microbial Pathogenicity Research Unit working on pathogenicity of bacterial infections, was founding Director of the Institute of Infections and Immunity, University of Nottingham, and was appointed Director of the PHLS Central Public Health Laboratory, which is the National Centre for Reference Microbiology, in October 1995. Since 2003 he has become an Executive Director of the Health Protection Agency (HPA) in his capacity as Director of the Specialist and Reference Microbiology Division, and is also Director of R&D for the HPA. His basic science research has led to over 300 publications. He is Chairman of a number of International and National learned societies and committees, and on the Editorial Board of six scientific journals. He holds three chairs, being a Special Professor of the University of Nottingham (microbial pathogenicity), Visiting Professor at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine (Microbiology) and Professor of Microbial Ecology at the Free University of Herborn.

Christianne Brusckhe is a scientist with knowledge of zoonotic diseases, food safety, veterinary epidemiology, veterinary virology and immunology. She has a broad experience in the fields of animal health and food safety & quality from different angles: as a veterinary practitioner, as a researcher and as a policy officer of the national inspection service for livestock and meat (RVV), and worked in these fields in the central and eastern European countries.

Christianne completed her MSc and PhD in Veterinary Medicine at the University of Utrecht. Her thesis was entitled "Pathogenesis and Vaccinology of BVDV Infections". She worked as a veterinary surgeon before becoming Head of the Bovine Virology Laboratory at ID-Lelystad in 1995. In 2000, she took up the position of Director of Research Notifiable Diseases and Pathology (division of infectious diseases) at ID-Lelystad. During this time she was also Program leader of a research program investigating the development of new techniques to control notifiable diseases consisting of 12 research projects, which was conducted by the Ministry of Agriculture, Nature Management and Food Quality. She is presently Director of the infectious diseases division, Animal Sciences Group (former ID-Lelystad).



Christianne Brusckhe: Vice-Chairperson
Governing Board

EVENT REVIEW

8-10 Sept - The first MVN Thematic Meeting held from 8-10 September at the Royal Holloway College in Surrey, UK. Each institute sent four representatives, and a total of 54 people attended. The delegates broke into groups for each thematic area: Epidemiology, Host-Microbe interaction, Detection & Control, and Risk Research to define the network scope for the next five years. The meeting outputs included draft state-of-the-art assessments and proposals for current work plans for each thematic area. This information will be worked on further, and will form the basis of the science strategy and work program for the next Joint Program of Activity (JPA).

21-22 Sept - From 21-22 September, 2004, a "Kick-off" Management Meeting took place in Utrecht, The Netherlands. This involved meetings of the Governing Board, the Advisory Panel and the Coordinating Forum of the Network. Professor Joost Ruitenber from the National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM) in The Netherlands, gave a Keynote Lecture on "Public health risks from emerging zoonotic diseases". During the meeting of the Governing Board, the election of a Chairperson (Peter Boriello) and Deputy Chairperson (Christianne Brusckhe) took place.

13 Oct - On 13 October 2004, The Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM), together with DTI Bioscience Unit sponsored a PAWS evening 'BioAlert - Behind the Headlines' which presented writers/producers/directors with ideas of how to microbiology can be portrayed in TV and radio drama. Prof Diane Newell (VLA), Dr David Rhodes (HPA), Dr Jim Robinson (National Institute for Biological Control) and Daniel Percival, (TV Producer - "Smallpox 2002" and "Dirty War") each gave a presentation and discussed the challenges of combating biological hazards.

14-15 Oct - Most of the Workpackages have now held productive kick-off meetings to discuss tasks for the 18 months ahead:

7 Sept, WP4, PulseNet Europe, Copenhagen
29 Sept, WP5, Lyssavirus, Amsterdam
14-15 Oct, WP12 (CrypNet), Rome
26-27 Oct, WP 13, Copenhagen
28-29 Oct, WP14, Copenhagen
11-12 Nov, WP 6, GIS, Copenhagen

Publicity / talks / appearances

Following the launch of Med-Vet-Net, we have received some coverage in the news media:

1 Sept - UK, BBC TV News
2 Sept - UK, Radio 4 - Farming Today
Interviews with Veterinary Times, and The Scientist

COMMUNICATIONS UNIT

Visual Guidelines

The Med-Vet-Net *Visual Guidelines* will soon be distributed to all participants in the Network. These guidelines present descriptions and templates for various documents, such as business cards, powerpoint presentations, printed documents as well as use of our logo and colours. They aim to provide Med-Vet-Net partners with a guide on how to visually prepare documents so that each Institute can feel and look part of the Network. Ultimately, this means that regardless of Institute, material regarding Med-Vet-Net

appears similar to the outside world.

Events Calendar

You may already be aware that there is an online Calendar on our internal website that can be accessed by all network members. Meetings and events can be entered by all members, and this should assist in scheduling of additional meetings. Please can you ensure that your events are up-to-date. Contact info@medvetnet.org if you require more information.

New Communications Director

Teresa Belcher started in her position as Communications Director on 1 October 2004. Teresa is a Science Communicator, successfully combining her knowledge of science with her skills in communication and journalism. Completing a BSc (Hons) in Biological and Environmental Sciences at Murdoch University in Western Australia in 1992, Teresa undertook research in bioremediation and soil microbes. She then went on to work as an Environmental Consultant in the field of waste management, contaminated sites, bioremediation, field survey and environmental impact studies.

Following the completion of a Masters in Science Communication at the Australian National University, Teresa has worked to promote scientific ideas and research to other researchers, industry, government and the public. This has included event management for the Australian Science Festival, promotion of geological sciences, writing science articles for the Australian National University newspaper, PR and communications for the Research School of Biological Sciences, at the Australian National University, and more recently (2000-2004) PR and corporate communications for Leica Geosystems in Switzerland.



Teresa Belcher:
Communications
Director Med-Vet-Net

UPCOMING EVENTS

26 Nov - An international symposium entitled 'Nematode parasites: genetic diversity, virulence genes, diagnosis and control methods' will be held on 26 November 2004 at the AFSSA headquarters in Paris. This is organised by the Joint Research Unit BIPAR as part of the Research contracts TRICHIPORSE (QLRT-2000-01156), NAS extension (QLK1-CT-2002-02826) and MedVetNet (Workpackage 11 : TRICHINET), which are funded by the European Union under the Fifth and Sixth Framework Programmes "Quality of Life and Management of Living Resources (QoL)". The symposium is supported by the French Food safety Agency (AFSSA), the National Institute for Agricultural Research (INRA), the National Veterinary School of Maisons-Alfort (ENVA) and the French Parasitological Society (SFP). More information contact jc.gnanou@medvetnet.org

30 Nov - The above meeting will be followed by the TrichiNet Meeting (Workpackage 11) on 30 November, 2004, also at AFSSA. More information contact jc.gnanou@medvetnet.org

One to put in your diaries!
Med-Vet-Net Annual General Meeting
30 Jun – 1 July, 2005

The AGM will be held at King Alfred's College Winchester, UK

22-24 Nov - 2004 Australian Biosecurity Cooperative Research Center for Emerging Infectious Diseases (AB-CRC) National Workshop, Mooloolaba, Queensland, Australia

CONTACT US

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Contributions and suggestions are welcome.

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Med-Vet-Net is a European Network of Excellence on Zoonoses Research

Visit <http://www.medvetnet.org>

Med-Vet-Net: EU Network of Excellence

New EU Research Instruments

Med-Vet-Net is a Network of Excellence set up by the European Union. Networks of Excellence (NoEs) aim to strengthen scientific and Technological excellence by integrating at the European level the necessary resources and expertise to achieve European leadership in the field.

Med-Vet-Net comprises of key European zoonoses medical and veterinary research groups. It currently consists of 16 European partners from 10 countries (see map below). Over 300 scientists from multi-disciplines are involved, including medics, veterinarians, epidemiologists, risk analysts, statisticians, immunologists, microbiologists, food scientists and molecular geneticists.



United Kingdom

- 1 Health Protection Agency (HPA)
- 2 Society for Applied Microbiology (SfAM)
- 3 Veterinary Laboratories Agency (VLA)



Hungary

- 8 Veterinary Medical Research Institute (VMRI)



Poland

- 13 National Institute of Hygiene



Italy

- 9 Italian National Institute of Health



Spain

- 14 Institute of Health Carlos III. National Centre of Microbiology



Denmark

- 4 Danish Institute of Food and Veterinary Research (DFVF)
- 5 Statens Serum Institut (SSI)



Netherlands

- 10 Central Institute for Animal Disease Control (CIDC)



Sweden

- 15 Complutense University Madrid (UCM)
- 16 National Veterinary Institute



France

- 6 French Food Safety Agency (AFSSA)

- 11 Instituut voor Dierhouderij en Diergezondheid BV (ID-Lelystad)

- 12 National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)



Germany

- 7 Federal Institute for Risk Assessment (BfR)

