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ACTIVITIES

September - December 2009

EUROPEAN UNION

Madrid conference brings together European experts on healthcare worker safety

*Sharps safety proposal moves to EU
Council for final approval*



Janine Jagger with (left) Dr. Luis Mazón Cuadrado (Hospital Universitario de Fuenlabrada, Madrid) and (right) Dr. F. Jesús Alvarez Hidalgo (Principal Administrator, European Commission, Unit on Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work), at the 1st International Congress on Occupational Risk in the Health Care Sector in Madrid. Dr. Mazón served as conference chair.

The First International Congress on Occupational Risk in the Health Care Sector was held in Madrid, Spain, October 28-30, 2009, sponsored by Spain's National Association of Occupational Medicine in Health (the Spanish acronym is ANMTAS). The conference, chaired by Dr. Luis Mazón Cuadrado of the Hospital Universitario de Fuenlabrada in Madrid, drew experts and participants from across Europe, including representatives from the European Agency for Safety and Health at Work and the Studio Italiano sul Rischio Occupazionale di infezione da HIV (SIROH) of Italy's

National Institute for Infectious Diseases. Janine Jagger was an invited speaker.

One of the goals of the conference was to provide a forum for developing consensus among relevant professional and government organizations of the European Union (EU) on occupational health issues related to healthcare settings, including prevention of sharps injuries.

The conference session devoted to bloodborne pathogen risk included a presentation by Gabriella De Carli, MD, of the Ital-

ian SIROH group, on healthcare worker risks in the European environment.

In the same session, Dr. F. Jesús Alvarez Hidalgo, Principal Administrator of the European Commission's Unit on Health, Safety and Hygiene at Work, detailed the current status of the

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To our friends and supporters...



The card at left was sent by Xiuying Mao (in the striped shirt to the left of Elaine Kornblatt Phillips, center). Ms. Mao (Program Manager, Think Tank Research Center for Health Development, Beijing) and the rest of the group pictured represent some of China's foremost thought leaders in infection control, and were among more than 400 participants in a conference on healthcare worker safety held on October 30, 2009, on the island of Hainan in China, sponsored by BD. Phillips was a featured speaker at the conference.

To all our friends and supporters, we echo Mrs. Mao's wishes for a Happy New Year. We are grateful for the many opportunities we were afforded in 2009 to visit countries across the globe—including Canada, Mexico, Brazil, Venezuela, Columbia, India, Saudi Arabia, Democratic Republic of Congo, China, Russia, Italy, and Spain—and work with, and learn from, so many dedicated colleagues. We are especially grateful to our corporate partners—B. Braun Medical, BD, Medikit Co. Ltd., and Smiths Medical—who make this work, and the fulfillment of our mission, possible.



International activities: FOCUS ON LATIN AMERICA

The Center's work in Latin America is proliferating, with three visits during Fall 2009.



Ginger Parker conducting EPINet training in Maracay, Venezuela; acting as translator is Walter Alarcon, MD, MSc, Senior Service Fellow in the Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations and Field Studies, U.S. National Institute of Occupational Safety and Health.

In September, Ginger Parker traveled to Maracay, Venezuela, to participate in the First Regional Meeting for Latin America and the Caribbean on Health Protection for Healthcare

Workers. The three-day meeting was co-sponsored by the Pan American Health Organization (PAHO), the World Health Organization (WHO), and the U.S. National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), as part of a joint initiative to prevent occupational transmission of bloodborne pathogens in Latin American healthcare workers.

Collaborating in this effort was the Arnaldo Gabaldon Institute of Advanced Studies in Public Health, part of Venezuela's Ministry of Health. Goals included presentation of data on

working conditions of Latin American healthcare workers, development of relevant health and safety policies, and increasing participants' knowledge of safe practices in healthcare settings. More than 150 people from nine countries—Brazil,

Colombia, Costa Rica, Cuba, Ecuador, Panama, Peru, Trinidad and Tobago, and Venezuela—attended the conference.

During days two and three, in-depth training in occupational health and safety programs for healthcare settings was provided. Ginger Parker conducted a training workshop on the EPINet sharps injury surveillance program.

In October, Elayne Kornblatt Phillips went to Sao Paulo, Brazil, to participate in a WHO/PAHO Collaborating Centers and National Reference Institutions meeting on "Sustainable Development and Environmental Health." Phillips is a member of the Working Group on Workers' Health, headed by Luz Maritza Tennessee, MD, MPH (Senior Regional Advisor on Workers' Health, PAHO); the group is responsible for outlining steps to achieve the WHO Global Plan of Action objectives related to workers' health. This includes a collaborative effort between PAHO, NIOSH, and the International Healthcare Worker Safety Center to expand sharps injury surveillance in Latin American countries. Pointing out that the Center's training activities in Venezuela and Colombia are an important step in this direction, Dr. Tennessee remarked, "For the first time, we will have surveillance data from our hospitals about healthcare workers' exposures to bloodborne pathogens."

In December, Parker visited Columbia to participate in meetings organized by Columbia's Ministry of Health and

Social Protection under the PAHO/WHO/NIOSH joint initiative. Marta Velasco, an occupational health nurse with Columbia's MOH, helped organize the meetings. Parker conducted two EPINet training programs: on December 1-2, for representatives from 18 hospitals in the Antioquia Hospitals Network in Medellin; and on December 3-4, for representatives from 22 hospitals in the Bogota Public Hospitals Net-



Elayne Kornblatt Phillips (far right) in Sao Paulo, Brazil, with (left) Melissa McDiarmid (U. Maryland School of Medicine, Occupational Health Program) and (middle) Dr. Luz Maritza Tennessee (PAHO).

work. A total of 58 certificates were awarded for completion of EPINet training.

Columbia's Ministry of Health hopes that supporting sharps injury surveillance training will ultimately yield data that can be used by professional associations and governmental agencies to support improvements in policies and practices related to healthcare worker safety.

In Medellin, Parker visited the Metro Salud Women's and Children's Hospital, a public hospital. She noted that, while safety-engineered devices were not commonly used, some safe work practices had been implemented, such as placing approved sharps disposal containers at point-of-use. □



Participants in EPINet training seminar led by Ginger Parker in Medellin, Columbia, holding their training certificates.

TRAINING PROGRAM IN OCCUPATIONAL EXPOSURE PREVENTION

Chinese fellows visit Center in December

The Center ended a busy year by hosting, during the second week in December, a distinguished group of Chinese thought leaders in infection control and healthcare worker safety for its Fellows Training Program in Occupational Exposure Prevention. Center Research Director Elayne Kornblatt Phillips had visited China in October to speak at a conference on healthcare worker safety, and asserted that “healthcare workers, administrators and policymakers were poised to move forward” on needlestick safety legislation. The group that came to U.Va. is well-equipped to lead that charge.

The fellows included two leading Chinese physicians in infection control and infectious diseases—Bijie Hu and Baiyi Chen. Dr. Hu is chairman of the Infection Control Branch of the China Preventive Medicine Association, the largest organization for infection control in China. He provides expert consultation on infection control policy to the Chinese Ministry of Health, and organizes China’s largest and most prestigious infection control conference. In 2009, he led a group of collaborators in establishing an EPINet surveillance network in Shanghai that includes 70 hospitals; he will be responsible for organizing training and guidelines for the network. Dr. Chen is Chief of the Division of Infectious Diseases at the First Hospital of



Participants in December 2009 Fellows Training Program (l-r): Dr. Bijie Hu (China Preventive Medicine Assn.); Niuyun Sun (National Institute of Hospital Administration); Dr. Baiyi Chen (First Hospital of China Medical University); Siyuan Liu, BD/China; Elayne K. Phillips; Xiaodong Gao (China Preventive Medicine Assn.); Guamei Xu (Fall 2009 Visiting Nurse Scholar, U.Va. School of Nursing); Janine Jagger.

China Medical University in Shenyang, and directs the Infection Control Quality Control Service for Liaoning Province. During 2010 he will organize an EPINet sharps injury surveillance program and work on related policy for China’s northeast region.

Also participating in the December program were Niuyun Sun and Patricia Ching. Ms. Sun, Deputy Director of the Healthcare Safety and Risk Management Center at the National Institute of Hospital Administration, is responsible for drafting regulations regarding management of medical devices and equipment in clinical hospitals for the Chinese Ministry of Health. In 2010 she will focus on safe use of medical devices and safety-engineered equipment, and will help organize clinical stud-



Elayne K. Phillips with Patricia Ching, RN, at conference on Hainan Island, China, October 2009. The Chinese text behind them says, “Stop needlestick injuries in China!”

ies on needlestick injuries and catheter-related bloodstream infections. Patricia Ching (shown in picture above with Elayne Kornblatt Phillips during Phillips’ October visit to China) is Senior Nursing Officer in Infection Control and Quality Improvement at Hong Kong’s Queen Mary Hospital, and past chair of the Asia Pacific Infection Control Nursing Association. She has worked on healthcare worker safety and sharps injury issues for over 10 years, and frequently conducts training and educational workshops for key opinion leaders in mainland China. □

OUR MISSION:**Setting a global standard for healthcare worker protection**

Healthcare workers are a crucial resource in all countries. But in many places, they are at high risk of acquiring preventable, life-threatening occupational infections.

We believe healthcare workers everywhere should be provided with the basic protections that have been shown to prevent exposures and infections. We believe that these measures should be mandatory, and should be provided free of charge to workers:

- Hepatitis B vaccination for all healthcare workers.
- Elimination of unnecessary sharps.
- Availability of safety-engineered needles and sharp medical devices.
- Availability of basic barrier garments for blood intensive procedures.
- Post-exposure prophylaxis for all healthcare workers who sustain an occupational exposure to HIV.

In China, as in many countries around the world, hospital-acquired infections (HAIs)—including healthcare worker infections from occupational blood exposures—have become a topic of urgent concern. The 2003 SARS epidemic revealed a need to strengthen healthcare worker protection from infectious diseases—the WHO estimated that almost 20% of those infected with SARS in China were healthcare workers.

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Madrid conference brings together European experts on healthcare worker safety

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EU legislative proposal that was adopted by the European Commission on October 26, 2009 ("Proposal for a Council Directive implementing the Framework Agreement on prevention from sharp injuries in the hospital and healthcare sector concluded by HOSPEEM and EPSU"). The HOSPEEM-EPSU agreement provides for an integrated, EU-wide approach to sharps injury risk assessment and prevention, including training, awareness-raising, monitoring, and follow-up procedures. According to HOSPEEM, the agreement aims to "achieve the safest possible working environment for healthcare employees and protect workers at risk" of injury from "all types of sharp medical objects, including needlesticks."

Dr. Alvarez explained that the sharps safety proposal now moves forward to the EU Council of Ministers for a final decision. If approved by the Council, it would become legally binding across the EU, with penalties for non-compliance. It would go into effect two years after final adoption. □

PUBLICATIONS & PRESENTATIONS

Accepted for publication:

• Jagger J, Berguer R, Phillips EK, Parker G, Gomaa AE. Increase in sharps injuries in surgical settings versus non-surgical settings after passage of national needlestick legislation. *Journal of the American College of Surgeons* (accepted 12/09).

Submitted:

• Barroso-Aguirre J, Jagger J, Pimentel-Nieto D, Perry J, Parker G, Phillips EK, et al. Comparison of Mexico and U.S. EPINet sharps injury surveillance data: opportunities for prevention [conference abstract]. 5th Decennial International Conference on Healthcare-Associated Infections; Atlanta, March 18-22, 2010.
• Phillips EK, Pillay S, Goldberg P, Jagger J. Risk factors for occupational exposure among surgeons in South Af-

rica: Results of a retrospective survey. *South African Journal of Surgery*.

Presentations:

• Janine Jagger: "Recent advances in safety-engineered devices." First International Congress on Occupational Risk in the Health Care Sector. Madrid, Spain; October 28-30, 2009.
• Ginger Parker: EPINet training workshops in Venezuela and Columbia, September and December, 2009 (see page 2).
• Elayne Kornblatt Phillips: - "Global standard for health care worker safety." BD China Health Care Worker Safety Forum. Hainan Island, China; October 30, 2009.
- Two talks at annual meeting of the American Public Health Assn.: "Safety at the end of the waste stream: occupational

injuries among hospital auxiliary workers"; "Unsafe misconceptions about the performance of safety-engineered needles." Philadelphia, PA: November 9-11, 2009.

Other items:

• The most recent issue of *OR Manager* (January 2010) includes an article on sharps safety in surgical settings ("Blunting sharps injuries in the OR continues to be a work in progress") with extensive comments by IHWSC Associate Director Jane Perry. Copy can be provided upon request. □

News of our fellows

Dr. Murali Chakravarthy of Wockhardt Hospitals in Bangalore, who was a Fall 2008 fellow in the Center's Training Program in Occupational Exposure Prevention, is preparing an article, with colleagues, on EPINet data from four major hospitals in India. Among other findings, Dr. Chakravarthy reports that "housekeeping staff sustained nearly 20% of injuries, which suggests an urgent need for improving sharps disposal practices." As a point of comparison, in U.S. EPINet data from 2006-07, housekeepers sustained 2% of injuries, and in Mexican EPINet data from the same period, 12%. □

EPINet news

Ginger Parker reports that colleagues in Russia are currently pilot-testing the Russian version of EPINet. Parker has recently responded to requests for EPINet from Turkey and the Czech Republic. The EPINet Sharps Injury and Blood Exposure Surveillance system is available in 16 different languages (as well as several different English versions). The different versions can be accessed at the Center's EPINet Global Resources page: <http://www.healthsystem.virginia.edu/internet/safetycenter/internetsafetycenterwebpages/EPINetResources/EPINetpage.cfm>.