

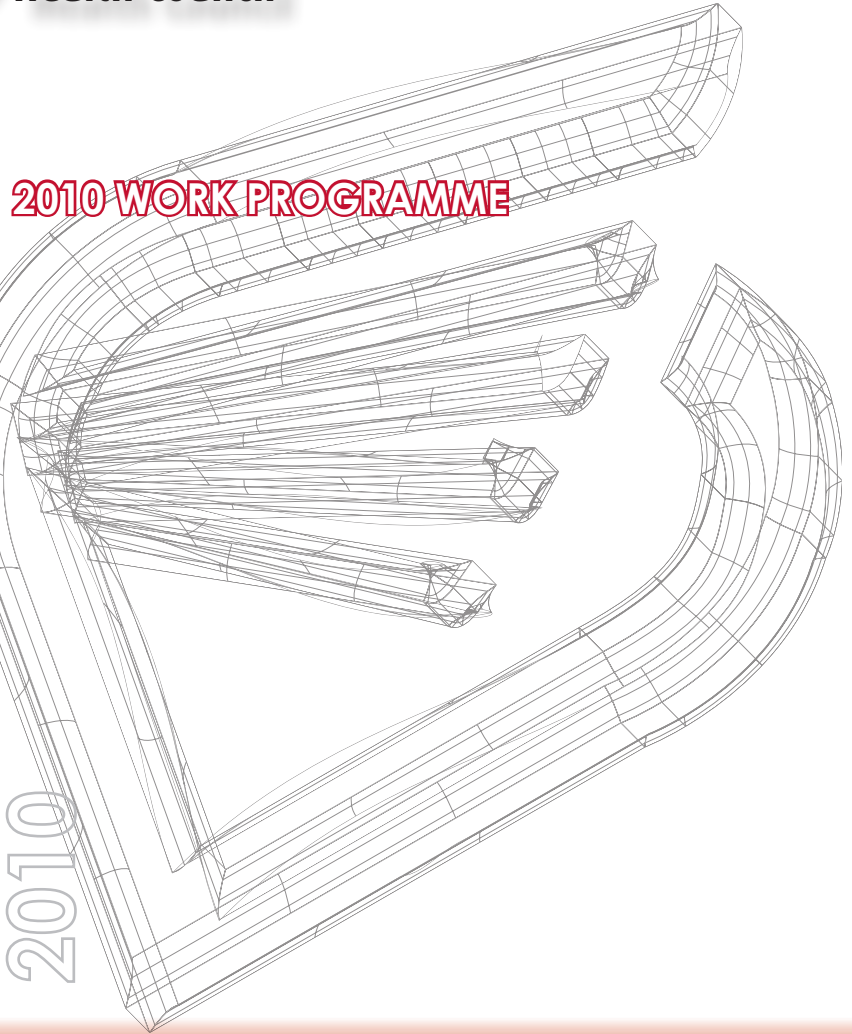


**Superior  
Health Council**

WORK PROGRAMME

2010

**2010 WORK PROGRAMME**







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**WORK PROGRAMME**



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Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety  
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Please cite this document as follows:

Superior Health Council. 2010 Work programme. Brussels:  
Superior Health Council; 2009.

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Legal deposit no.: D/2010/7795/5  
ISBN no.: 9789490542078

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## INTRODUCTORY

The 2010 work programme offers a survey of the activities undertaken by the Superior Health Council (SHC) over the period extending from 1 January to 31 December 2010. The first eight chapters focus on the various fields of activity of the SHC, viz.

1. Mental health and psychosocial factors;
2. Physical environmental factors (ionising and non-ionising radiation);
3. Chemical environmental factors;
4. Diet, nutrition and health, including food safety and food microbiology;
5. Blood and blood derivatives;
6. Cells, tissues and organs of human and animal origin;
7. Vaccination, infectiology and infection control during care and
8. Multidisciplinary.

The activities mentioned in these eight chapters can be subdivided into the following three subcategories:

1. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports;
2. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports;
3. Planned: new projects.

The first group comprises those themes which are already being treated and will continue to be dealt with during the 2010 programme period. This concerns both requested advisory reports (select or confidential advisory reports) and advisory reports issued on the SHC's own initiative (projects). It will be possible for several advisory reports of the first category to be finalised before the end of the programme period. As a result, space is created for the third category, i.e. subjects that are being "planned". At this stage, however, it is not yet known when all of these projects can be started.

Also, it may be the case that, in the light of new priorities, other topics are dealt with first or that new requests for advice are received (unexpectedly). In so far as the latter can be anticipated, these topics can be found under the second subcategory (i.e. "expected"). Also included in this group are SHC activities that, to some extent, are carried out more or less regularly every year. In the programme period, these may or may not result in advisory reports. What is meant here are a number of requests or re-occurring activities, such as those concerned with "Novel Foods", second-line biocide dossiers, food supplements, etc. As was mentioned earlier, the SHC, in addition to issuing advisory reports on request, also provides advisory reports on its own initiative. Therefore, there is, for each field of activity, a reflection group whose purpose it is to concentrate now and again on the public health issues that we have to cope with. The activities of these reflection groups also belong to the second category ("expected").

From time to time, the SHC also has to deal with urgent interim requests for advice or requires attention for an urgent issue itself. Therefore, there may be some change in priorities and publication dates during the programme period in consultation with the competent authorities.

Also at an international level, the SHC is increasingly involved in collaboration networks. The European EuSANH project plays an important part in this. This will be discussed in more detail in chapter 9.



# 1. MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

In the field of mental health, the working groups issue advisory reports, recommendations or reports on health issues that are, wholly or partially, related to the behaviour of individuals, groups or the organisation of life in society (psychosocial factors). The working groups especially focus on:

- High-risk behaviour related to addiction caused by substance abuse (alcohol, tobacco and drugs) and addictions resulting from extraordinary behaviour (pathological phenomena);
- Psychosocial factors which cause, prolong or worsen health problems;
- The quality of human relations, especially in healthcare;
- The training of health professionals in these matters.

## I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

### **SHC 8155 – The prescription of psychotropic medicines for stress, anxiety, sleeping disorders and depression**

This project aims at analysing the use of psychotropic medicines in Belgium, drawing scientifically founded conclusions and making relevant recommendations. There will be two publications, one dealing with the treatment of depressions and the other with how to tackle anxiety disorders.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

### **SHC 8325 – Behavioural disorders in children and teenagers**

In this advisory report, the SHC aims at dealing with the socially sensitive topic of behavioural disorders in children and teenagers in more detail. The advisory report broaches the various causes, the development, the nature as well as the frequency and diagnosis of behavioural disorders in children and teenagers. The goal is to treat or even to prevent these problems in a more efficient way.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

### **SHC 8570 – Advisory report on the prescription and use of Rilatine and related medication**

Over the last few years, there has been a marked increase in the sale of Rilatine pills in Belgium, which raises questions about the dangers of this medicine. This advisory report will inform the public about such harmful effects as the risk of cardiovascular diseases and brain damage. Also, it will proffer new recommendations on prescribing these pills, and above all, on the long-term follow-up (consequences for the growth of young people, ...). The advisory report will also try to specify what diagnoses require the use of Rilatine.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010

### **SHC 8518 – Multidisciplinary collaboration in basic mental healthcare**

In order to be able to give an adequate response to the increased demand resulting from mental health problems, it seems unavoidable that there should be more interdisciplinary collaboration among frontline healthcare workers. Based on a previous advisory report (SHC 7814), the SHC is able to give advice on the following issues: What frontline actors need to be involved in this development? What can be their realistic task? What instruments are currently available to give shape to this multidisciplinary approach? What conditions need to be fulfilled in order to achieve multidisciplinary collaboration on mental healthcare problems?

.....➤ Planned for the first trimester of 2010

## **II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports**

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet known what requests we may expect in the area of mental health and psychosocial factors in 2010.

## **III. Planned: new projects**

### **SHC 8571 – The impact of benzodiazepines on health in general, with a particular focus on dementia**

The short term effects of benzodiazepines are relatively well-documented, but little is known about the influence of such prescriptions on health. This is all the more important as benzodiazepines are sometimes prescribed outside well-defined pathologies. More precisely, the emphasis should be on the cognitive and physical functioning of the elderly and on the prevalence of dementia in this consumer target group. As a matter of fact, there is scientific evidence that this medicine has a harmful effect on psychomotor abilities. The GPs' attention needs to be drawn to the possibly rather hasty lumping together of dementia with the effects

of benzodiazepines. The interactions with neuroleptics and antidepressants are a frequent phenomenon and worsen the problems related to Alzheimer's disease.

.....➤ As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

### **HGR 8581 – Pathologies that become chronic**

It is now becoming clear in both mental healthcare as well as in somatic medicine that certain pathologies (depressions, addictions, etc.) become chronic, which process, after some time, results in the therapeutic means available being extremely limited. This advisory report will attempt to issue recommendations aimed at identifying symptoms of the chronification process that are either more closely related to the pathology or, on the contrary, that result from the lack of early psychosocial interventions. This should help as a guideline to measures taken in the area of public health.

.....➤ Starts in early 2010

### **Violence against children**

With this advisory report, the SHC intends to find out what are the effects of ill-treatment at an early age on young people.

.....➤ As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

## 2. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The task of the working groups in the area of physical environmental factors consists in issuing advisory reports and recommendations aimed at assessing the health risks associated with various physical agents and their applications. They also evaluate those measures which aim at maximally restricting the exposure of man and the environment to radiation. The area is subdivided in two important sub-areas: ionising radiation and non-ionising radiation.

### 2A. Ionising radiation

#### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

##### ***SHC 8277 – Informing and protecting the general public and staff directly or indirectly involved in nuclear medicine against radiation***

So as to be able to optimise doses, it is important to take stock of the current state of affairs concerning the rise of hybrid equipment (PET-CT and SPECT-CT). There is also a European Directive which imposes dosimetry measurements for treatments that use non-encapsulated sources. This leads to numerous practical problems and to a lack of reliability. Therefore, recommendations still need to be formulated in this area.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010

##### ***SHC 8322 – IMRT; Intensity modulated radiation therapy***

Present-day radiation therapy technology makes use of highly technological radiation equipment that attempts to increase considerably the radiation dose applied to a limited target volume. In some IMRT technologies, as well as in flat beam technology, there is the problem of secondary patient doses which may spread to the whole body and need to be assessed. Other technologies result in the dose limits being concentrated outside the target volume (cf. some IMRT technologies for lung tumours). It is possible to start from a comparison of IMRT technologies with other technologies which still have to be evaluated. They include hadron therapy, modern photon therapies (stereotactic radiotherapy, 4D radiotherapy, ...). Especially worth mentioning are the results of the workshop organised by the Belgian association for radiation protection in late 2006 – 2007, which dealt with the patient dose outside the target volume. The impact of tomographic imaging plays a key role in this.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010

## II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

The SHC does not know in advance what questions will be submitted by the Minister of Public Health or the competent authority. However, it is likely to receive requests for advisory reports on draft Royal Decrees (RD), Royal Decrees modifying the RD of 20 July 2001 (General regulations regarding the protection of the population, workers and environment against the danger of ionising radiation, ARBIS/RGPRI). As a matter of fact, the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC) is currently revising the ARBIS/RGPRI and each modification will be submitted to the SHC.

## III. Planned: new projects

### ***Evaluation of the increasing patient exposure to radiation due to the use of tomodensitometry (CT)***

This project aims at developing new recommendations on optimising the “patient dose” based on perceived dose indicators in the present-day CT-fleet according to the guidelines of the vademecum, as well as on the results of and the experience gained during the multicentric study in interventional radiology and in paediatric CT (including the aspects to do with giving information to the patient / the general public).

These new recommendations should be applicable to CTs which use mAs modulation technology: encouraging the development of a method to evaluate the “patient dose” (adapting the dose indicators, actual doses ...) and adapting the acceptability criteria of the equipment (RP91). These recommendations are also valid for the restrictions on the use of low-dose techniques.

.....➤ To be started in April 2010

### ***The use of X-radiation for other than strictly medical purposes***

The SHC is alarmed at the increasing use of X-radiation for a whole range of non-medical purposes (insurance, border control ...). In view of the known risk posed by ionising radiation, the SHC is planning a cost-benefit analysis of these applications for society.

.....➤ To be started in May 2010

### ***The issue of solid radioactive waste***

The increasing use of techniques which produce solid radioactive waste (nuclear medicine, power stations, ...) raises problems related to its removal, which should guarantee as small as possible a risk to the population and the environment. The SHC intends to examine this issue and to find out what are the possible solutions.

.....➤ To be started in April 2010

## **2B. Non-ionising radiation**

### **I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports**

As this work programme is being drawn up, there are no topics having to do with non-ionising radiation which have not been finalised and which will be completed during the 2010 programme period.

### **II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports**

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet known what requests may be expected in 2010 with regard to non-ionising radiation.

### **III. Planned: new projects**

#### ***Sunbathing wisely***

This project will look at the current state of knowledge about the influence of exposure to UV radiation from the sun on health. Also, it will focus on the extent to which exposure to the sun can have a positive or negative influence on the occurrence of melanoma of the skin, the occurrence of forms of cancer other than skin cancer, the occurrence of infectious diseases, etc. Moreover, it will examine whether the positive health effects of exposure to the sun (vitamin D) can also be achieved in some other way and what are the advantages and disadvantages of the different alternatives.

.....➤ To be started: early 2010

#### ***3D Ultrasound***

Three-dimensional ultrasounds (called four-dimensional when moving pictures are involved) were developed at the end of the eighties. There is no doubt that this technique has numerous advantages, but there are also a number of conditions that have to be fulfilled. Thus, a gynaecologist should have sufficient experience in traditional ultrasound examinations. However, 3D ultrasounds are also being carried out on a commercial basis, a practice referred to as "boutique ultrasounds". They are performed by commercial scanners who do not have the necessary competence. The aim of this project is to find out what are the potential problems posed by commercial 3D ultrasounds and what conditions should be imposed on carrying them out.

.....➤ To be started: early 2010

**Health effects of various types of light bulbs**

It has recently been shown in a number of publications that low-energy bulbs may have adverse health effects. This issue was brought to the media's attention by a French Action Group (called CRIEM). On the one hand, these bulbs are said to emit UV radiation, on the other, they contain mercury. This mercury is released when, for instance, the bulb is dropped.

In addition to assessing the possible risks linked to low-energy bulbs, we will also discuss a number of other means of lighting.

.....➤ To be started: June 2010

**Leukaemia induced in children by environmental factors. Collaboration project between the SHC and the GR****SHC 8548 – Leukaemia in children**

Leukaemia is the most frequent type of cancer in children in the developed countries. The greater attention paid to it and the development of increasingly better treatments over the past decades have significantly improved the chance of survival of children suffering from leukaemia. These days, attention is also paid to the identification of potential causes. In order to allow a scientific approach to this issue, a working group will be set up with the task of critically examining the published data that are currently available on leukaemia induction in children as well as using this as a basis for making an overview with possible proposals for further research.

.....➤ Preparatory meetings SHC: June 2009 – December 2009

.....➤ Collaboration SHC – GR: January 2010 – December 2010

### 3. CHEMICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The responsibility for evaluating the risk of pesticides and biocides has been moved to the European level. As a result, the SHC has been given a second-line role and is only consulted at the request of the Administration. The Council also has a second-line role in the event of a firm not agreeing with an advisory report of the Advisory Committee on Biocides (CAB).

However, pesticides and biocides are not the only dossiers which are submitted to the working groups. Questions about the risks of exposure to chemical substances can be submitted as well. In addition, the experts also deal with other health issues related to the presence of substances in the workplace and the environment. Finally, the working group can act on its own initiative in examining health issues that result from exposure to chemical environmental factors.

#### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

##### **SHC 8614 – The issue of chlorine in swimming pools**

Following a new publication on the causal relationship between the use of chlorine in swimming pools and respiratory problems in children, the new data will be examined at the Minister's request and the link between chlorine in swimming pools and health problems in children will be re-analyzed.

.....➤ Planned for April 2010

#### II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

##### **Appeal procedures for biocides**

As regards the authorisation procedure for the marketing of biocidal products (RD of 22.05.2003), firms can lodge an appeal with the Minister and the Administration against the decisions of the Advisory Committee on Biocides. The SHC is then requested to examine this appeal within a given period of time and according to a procedure determined by law. As each year, the SHC expects to be consulted on such matters. In 2008 – 2009, four such dossiers were dealt with.



### III. Planned: new projects

#### **SHC 8603 – effects of mobility on man and the environment**

Although there are fragmented regulations (per pollutant) regarding the effects of mobility on health and the environment, there are no general and standardised regulations available. The impact of mobility on health and the environment is related to various factors:

- The effect of particle emissions (NO<sub>x</sub>, PM<sub>10</sub>, PM 2.5, ozone, benzene, biofuels) into the atmosphere, ... as well as immission
- psychological effects (light, noise, ...)
- effects on the endocrine system
- accidents

Furthermore, the substances (both pollutants and non-pollutants) are not independent of each other (synergistic, antagonistic, additive effects) and new fuels are being marketed (biofuels), ... Therefore, it was suggested during the June 2009 session of the SHC Board that it is desirable to investigate to what extent more inclusive and targeted regulations are useful.

- As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

## 4. DIET, NUTRITION AND HEALTH, INCLUDING FOOD SAFETY (NASSA) AND FOOD MICROBIOLOGY

As part of the normative policy of the FPS Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment, the permanent NASSA working group carries out risk assessments for additives, chemical or microbiological contaminants, new ingredients or foodstuffs (NA/NF "Novel foods"), etc. As part of the nutritional policy of the FPS, the working group not only issues nutritional recommendations on which such projects as the NNHP – B (National Nutrition and Health Plan for Belgium) have to rely, but also provides advice concerning food supplements, labelling, special diets and so on.

The NASSA working group is part of the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) network and one of its members also represents the group within the ESCO (European Scientific Co-Operation), a working group that analyses the risks and benefits of folic acid enriched foods.

### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

#### **SHC 8310 – Safety of oils and fats**

This project aims at analysing the criteria that pertain to the instability of oils and fats, also in foods in which fat fractions are of little importance. The objective is to identify the most relevant criteria in terms of consumer health risks, in addition to potential contaminants. There will be an overview made of the health risks caused by a loss in quality of the fats.

.....➤ Planned for the end of 2010

#### **SHC 8311 – Evaluation of the exposure to risks linked to the natural presence of certain contaminants in natural mineral waters**

As a result of the revision of the European legislation and the Codex Alimentarius standards for natural mineral water, which determine the limit values for chemical contaminants that may be present in natural mineral water, there appears to be a tendency to bring these limit values simply in agreement with those of tap water. One of the consequences of this is that natural mineral water will also undergo a series of treatments, which, in the long run, will result in the loss of its natural character.

It is important to preserve the characteristics of natural mineral water and, at the same time, protect the consumers' health against certain risks. Therefore, the Administration wishes to be informed about the present-day state of our knowledge about the toxicity of fluoride (and possibly that of such other substances as barium and boron) and about the health risks caused by their presence in natural mineral water, so that it may be determined whether the present-day standards are justified or whether they need to be revised.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010

#### **SHC 8464 – Palm oil**

Palm oil is well on its way to becoming the most widely used vegetable oil worldwide (and probably also the most widely used source of fats). Various factors can account for this fact, which mainly leads to what may be feared to be a negative influence on the health of the public, who, often unconsciously, use large amounts of saturated fatty acids.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010

#### **SHC 8592 – Revision of the recommendations concerning a supplementary intake of lycopene and lutein via food supplements**

Following requests concerning the notification of food supplements and ingredients containing lycopene and/or lutein, the SHC has thought it useful to issue an advisory report on the limits to the supplementary intake of these nutrients. In doing so, account has been taken of, on the one hand, current regulatory procedures and, on the other, of recent data from the scientific literature.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

#### **SHC 8316 – Project: risk evaluation for *Bacillus cereus* in certain foodstuffs**

It is necessary to highlight the significance of the different variants of the psychotrophic strains of *Bacillus cereus* involved in outbreaks of food poisoning. It is also important to stress that recent scientific data about *Bacillus cereus* are available and that one has to take this into account in order to determine what the adequate options for risk management are. The literature and the available data have been used to make a general overview of the situation, from which conclusions as well as a series of recommendations have been drawn and brought to the attention of the Belgian authorities.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

#### **SHC 8386 – Viruses and food (area: food microbiology)**

Since 2004, virus related food infections have been regularly reported and, with the detection methods becoming increasingly efficient, there seems to be an increase in the frequency of virus related food poisoning. In 2007 and 2008, noroviruses became the most important cause of food-borne toxi-infections in Belgium.

As regards the implications for public health, it was deemed useful and opportune that the SHC – in light of recent developments in other (national and international) scientific bodies – should present a synthetic overview of the situation at the national level and offer relevant recommendations.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

### **SHC 8622 – Energy drinks**

The SHC finds it useful to issue an advisory report on energy drinks for the authorities and the general public. The concern about energy drinks results from the increased knowledge that has been gained over the last twenty years about the effects of their components on human health and their safety of use. Another matter of concern is the recently observed tendency for energy drinks to be consumed in exaggerated quantities and in combination with alcoholic beverages by young people in search of stimulating effects.

.....➤ Planned for early 2010

## **II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports**

### **Folic acid**

Following requests concerning the notification of food supplements and ingredients containing folic acid, the SHC finds it useful to issue an advisory report on the maximum supplementary intake of these nutrients.

### **Confidential advisory reports on “Novel Foods”**

Each year, the SHC is requested to issue advisory reports on new ingredients or foodstuffs. Also for 2010, we can expect a whole range of requests of this sort

### **Confidential advisory reports on the recognition of natural mineral water**

The recognition of spring water as “natural mineral water” requires an advisory report from the SHC.

## **III. Planned: new projects**

### **Revision of the booklet on omega-3 fatty acids**

This project aims at providing a critical analysis of the recent literature on the basis of which it will formulate rational conduct rules for the various fields involved as well as revise or clarify the recommendations. More particularly, it will determine which of the various n-3 fatty acids have any protective (or harmful) effects as well as the circumstances under which they do.

.....➤ This project will be started after finishing that on the “safety of oils and fats” (8310).

***Efficacy – innocuity of probiotic flora***

This project aims at taking stock of the methodologies intended for measuring the efficacy and the innocuity of probiotic flora in foodstuffs / food supplements.



As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

## 5. BLOOD AND BLOOD PRODUCTS

In this area, the general task of the SHC consists in developing and standardising good transfusion practices. It is this working group's permanent concern to minimise the possibility of known (or still unknown) infectious diseases being transmitted through blood. This includes all aspects of transfusion: this group deals with donor selection criteria, the screening for communicable diseases and the clinical indications for the various blood products. Within this framework, the working group also devotes special and continuous attention to the efficient management of the limited resource that are donors.

### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

#### **SHC 8366 – Guidelines for the use of immunoglobulins**

In order to provide practitioners with scientific support, the SHC has organised an expert meeting designed to take stock of the scientific knowledge on administering immunoglobulins. In addition to key indications, such as primary immunodeficiencies, immunoglobulins are currently being used for the treatment of a great many diseases, including numerous auto-immune diseases or illnesses that are suspected of having an auto-immune or infectious cause, sometimes through lack of other convincing explanations. The optimal use of immunoglobulins remains a key step in making available this treatment to patients that need it. Though stringent regulations for use are being implemented, it is necessary to make a continuous effort towards standardising and rationalising clinical indications in light of the progress made with alternative treatments.

.....➤ Planned for the first trimester of 2010

#### **SHC 8420 – Inquiry into the shelf life of red cell concentrates intended for patients who are to undergo cardiac surgery**

An article by Koch et al. entitled "Duration of red cell storage and complications after cardiac surgery" was recently published in the New England Journal of Medicine. In this retrospective study, the authors compared the results of administering preserved red cell concentrates to two groups of patients who underwent cardiac surgery. The first group received only such red cell concentrates as had been preserved for less than two weeks, the other received only such red cell concentrates as had been preserved for more than two weeks. The authors found out that administering red cell concentrates that had been preserved for over two weeks was associated not only with a significantly increased risk of post-operative complications but also with a diminished short and long-term survival. These are important observations which may also have an impact on public health in our country.

.....➤ Planned for the first trimester of 2010

## II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet known what requests we may expect in 2010 in the area of blood and blood products.

## III. Planned: new projects

### **SHC 8382 – The evolution of techniques for the screening for and reduction of pathogens in blood transfusion**

The safety of blood component transfusion is now being increased by the (genomic) screening for and/or the reduction of pathogens in all blood donations. In contrast to serological screening methods, which are always applied to single “units”, such Nucleic Acid Amplification Techniques (NAT) as are specific for viruses require a “pool” format in order to obtain economies of scale. Nevertheless, these technologies are not cost efficient because only a rather small reduction of the residual risk is observed as a result of the rejected donations. Moreover, new pathogen reduction techniques (which can eliminate certain unknown pathogens) are rapidly being developed. This in turn leads to expect individual unit donations to be made safe at an increased speed. In the light of new indications and risks (e.g. the transmission of recently identified pathogens), it is advisable to reconsider the progress made in newly acquired knowledge on the screening for and reduction of pathogens in transfusion medicine.



As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

### **SHC 8383 – Revision of the booklet on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (7276-2)**

In 2006, a ministerial circular was addressed to the hospitals and, more particularly, to those in charge of hygiene, with the aim of implementing the recommendations of the SHC on the prevention of transmissible spongiform encephalopathies in hospitals. Among other things, these recommendations hold that the ophthalmology department has to destroy its instruments after a cornea transplant, as this is high-risk surgery. As regards these obligations, it is necessary to follow developments in decontamination techniques very closely, and to include them in a revised version of the booklet. The project will update the booklet in the light of new data on the decontamination of surgical instruments.



As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

## 6. CELLS, TISSUES AND ORGANS OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL ORIGIN

The task of the working group in charge of this area is to rely on scientific developments to suggest and to monitor measures aimed at preventing the transmission of diseases as a result of the transplantation of organs, tissues and cells of human or animal origin or through the use of medical devices with cellular components.

### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

#### **SHC 8387 – Specific quality standards for allografts of the locomotor system**

These quality standards are a revised version of the standards for allografts of the locomotor system and replace the previous versions (1993, 2000). They take into account the provisions in national legislation and the relevant European requirements and recommendations.

The standards constitute a set of rules concerning what is good practice in donating, obtaining, removing, monitoring, processing, preserving and distributing human body material of the locomotor system intended for human application.



Planned for the first trimester of 2010

### II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

The SHC expects to be consulted by the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) for all technical problems related to the inspection of banks for human body material. Since October 2009, it is no longer the task of the SHC to issue advisory reports on the re-accreditation of banks for human body material, for which the FAMHP is now competent. Because of the competencies of the SHC's experts in this field, it is therefore to be expected that the SHC will be regularly requested to issue advice in connection with more general problems of a technical nature.

### III. Planned: new projects

The working group continues its work on the revision of the quality standards for human body material, taking into account the new legislation that has recently come into force. The group is going to examine the specific quality standards for femoral heads, dental allografts and amniotic membranes as well as revise the quality standards that are common to all tissues and cells.



- As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

The working group wishes to continue and finalise the following projects:

***Inactivation and safety of tissues, cells and organs with respect to bacteria, viruses and prions. Part on bacteria.***

The report first deals with taxonomy and medical microbiology. This is followed by an inventory of publications on the transmission and screening methods of bacteria on tissues. The report ends with the prevention of infections, the disinfection and sterilisation of tissues.

- As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

***Inactivation and safety of tissues, cells and organs with respect to bacteria, viruses and prions. Part on viruses.***

This report first provides general data concerning the taxonomy and the diagnosis of viral infections. This is followed by an inventory of the publications devoted to the transmission of viral infections through tissues. The text ends with the prevention of infections, the disinfection and sterilisation of tissues. This review of the literature has made it possible to formulate practical recommendations aimed at preventing the transmission of viral infections.

- As this programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear when the work on this project will begin.

## 7. VACCINATION, INFECTIOLOGY AND INFECTION CONTROL DURING CARE

As regards the area of "Vaccination, infectiology and infection control during care", the SHC has ad hoc working groups operative in the sub-areas of infectiology and infection control during care. Furthermore, there is a permanent working group on vaccination, which is responsible for issuing advisory reports and recommendations on vaccines, vaccination and vaccinology.

### 7A. Vaccination

The advisory reports and recommendations issued by the permanent working group on vaccination have to do either with the practice of vaccination in general (e.g. the updating of the basic vaccination schedule) or with one particular vaccine that is required for public health.

#### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

##### **SHC 8384 – Vaccination against chicken pox (children)**

In this advisory report, the Council proffers recommendations on replacing the combined Measles – Mumps – Rubella vaccine by a combined Measles – Mumps – Rubella – Chicken pox vaccine, which would lead to generalised vaccination against chicken pox in Belgium.

Planned for June 2010



##### **SHC 8385 – Zoster vaccination (adults)**

In this advisory report, the Council issues recommendations concerning the vaccination against herpes zoster, which aims at preventing herpes zoster and postherpetic neuralgia in adults.

Planned for June 2010



##### **SHC 8517 – Request for an advisory report on the vaccination against Measles – Mumps – Rubella**

Following the objective of the Regional Office for Europe of the World Health Organization, which aims at eliminating measles and rubella from the region by 2010, the SHC was requested to provide an advisory report on the following issues:

- Is it advisable to administer the second dose of the Measles – Mumps – Rubella (MMR) vaccine at an earlier age than is the case at present? Indeed, this increases the guarantee of reaching the 95% vaccination coverage that is being aimed at;

- Is it advisable to recommend two MMR doses for adults or for certain target groups?

Planned for September 2010

### **SHC 8561 – Fact sheets on the vaccination of high-risk patients**

These additional fact sheets are being formulated after numerous questions from vaccinators. There is need for a condensed version of the guidelines for the vaccination of high-risk patients. Different fact sheets will be drafted for the following high-risk patient groups: premature babies, pregnant women, chronically ill patients and patients suffering from immunosuppressive disorders.



Planned for March 2010

## **II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports**

Recurring aspects in updating the vaccination programmes:

- Each year, in June, the permanent working group on vaccination has as its task to clarify the vaccination schedule and to communicate it to the inter-ministerial conference of health ministers. The group also has to approve, on a yearly basis, the recommendations made about travel medicine. In addition, it has to detail the advice of the Belgian "Health Authorities" for each centrally registered vaccine (cf. the scientific leaflet of the vaccines).
- The group is also responsible for the periodic updating of the technical sheets dedicated to each recommended vaccination in the basic vaccination schedule for children, teenagers and adults as well as the sheets made for catch-up vaccinations or the rules for good vaccination practice. These sheets were compiled in the form of a vaccination guide in 2007 and are evaluated and, if necessary, revised on a yearly basis.
- Yearly advisory reports about the seasonal flu.

## **III. Planned: new projects**

As this work programme is being drawn up, there are no projects planned for the 2010 programme.

## **7B. infection control during care**

In the area of infection control during care (formerly known as “Hygiene”), the SHC experts focus on health issues which are liable to be found both in healthcare in general as well as in healthcare establishments in particular. In this area, there is a close collaboration with the Belgian Infection Control Society (BICS).

### **I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports**

#### ***SHC 8429 – Directives on the prevention of needle stick injuries and the measures to be taken in the event of such an injury (in collaboration with the Scientific Institute of Public Health)***

A catalogue of the safety equipment (needle containers, gloves, masks, blood sampling equipment, etc.) on the market (as well as an evaluation of its quality) already exists in France ([www.geres.org](http://www.geres.org)). Indeed, the use of safety equipment is one of the pillars of the prevention policy ([http://www.nsih.be/surv\\_prik/inl\\_fr.asp](http://www.nsih.be/surv_prik/inl_fr.asp)) to prevent needle stick injuries (beside surveillance, training, inclusion of standard precaution measures, awareness raising campaigns, optimising the use of disposable equipment, etc.). Unlike its neighbouring countries, Belgium does not yet have any guidelines for the prevention of needle stick injuries and for the measures to be taken in the event of such an injury.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010 – early 2011

#### ***SHC 8573 – Managing the OR***

The Federal Platform for Hospital Hygiene has recently carried out an inquiry into the observance of hygiene prescriptions (based on foreign recommendations) in the operating room of Belgian hospitals. The analysis of the results shows that current practices vary greatly. Therefore, the SHC was asked to provide a list of standards and recommendations to remedy this.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010 – early 2011

#### ***SHC 8579 – Revision of the recommendations on tuberculosis***

The previous recommendations of the SHC on this subject go back to 1996. It is necessary to update them in the light of the evolution of knowledge about diagnostics, epidemiology and resistance surveillance.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010 – early 2011

**SHC 8580 - The management of risk factors for infection during the carrying out of works in hospitals**

Building and renovation works as well as all technical activities undertaken in a healthcare establishment entail a series of infection risks for both patients and "staff" (e.g. *Aspergillus* and *Legionella*). Recommendations based on those already in existence at a national and international level are required and are expected by the healthcare sector.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010 – early 2011

**SHC 8582 – Credé's method**

The practice of instilling silver nitrate eye-drops and antibiotics into a newborn's eyes (referred to as Credé's method) raises many questions about its relevance and use. It seems useful to make an assessment of the epidemiological situation (gonococcus) in Belgium. In order to proffer relevant recommendations, it is necessary to carry out an analysis of the present-day knowledge.

.....➤ Planned for late 2010 – early 2011

## II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet known what requests we may expect in the area of infection control during care in 2010.

## III. Planned: new projects

As this work programme is being drawn up, there are no projects planned for the 2010 programme.

## 8. MULTIDISCIPLINARY

Subsumed under the label “Multidisciplinary” are such topics as cannot be included in one of the previous fields, but for which the Superior Health Council is, however, required to issue advisory reports. It is often a mix of some of our working areas.

### I. In progress: projects – select advisory reports – confidential advisory reports

#### **SHC 8565 – Public Health Genomics in Belgium**

The SHC has been asked for its vision about Public Health Genomics. This will be explained during a symposium in February 2010.



Planned for January 2010

Contact person: Anne-Madeleine Pironnet

#### **SHC 8587 – Instruments for cosmetic applications and related skin treatments**

The SHC finds that there is need for an evaluation of quite a number of appliances and new technologies which are being marketed for cosmetic applications. In the advisory report on thermodermie, it has been pointed out that, in view of the fact that the use of such appliances is not completely without risk, it is important to urgently regulate a number of related fields that are concerned with skin treatment.

The SHC concludes that it is necessary to draw a picture of the potential problems caused not only by the appliances themselves and their operating mechanism, but also, and more importantly, by a faulty use and use on individuals with an underlying pathology. Moreover, it appears that there is no scientific foundation for the efficiency of these appliances and that the advertising for them can often be referred to as misleading. With its advisory report, the SHC aims at providing more clarity about this phenomenon.

The SHC takes the view that collaboration on a European level is a plus in tackling this issue.



Planned for late 2010

Contact person: Anne-Madeleine Pironnet

**SHC 8356 – Intolerance or hyper-sensitivity to physical and chemical environmental factors**

In our modern society, medicine is confronted with a series of chronic, multisystemic complaints for which no single cause can be found. In a number of cases, those suffering from them attribute them to "hyper-sensitivity" to one or several "man-made" environmental factors. The criteria used in diagnosing such health problems are not very precise. In some cases, this leads to preventive and curative actions of which the use has, putting it mildly, not been demonstrated. With a number of individuals and/or groups, this leads to behaviour patterns which enhance rather than remedy these complaints. A SHC working group has dealt with this issue and will attempt to make its recommendations on this subject known in the course of 2010.



Planned for early 2010

Contact person: Jean-Jacques Dubois

## II. Expected: select advisory reports and confidential advisory reports

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet known what requests we may expect in this field in 2010.

## III. Planned: new projects

As this work programme is being drawn up, the 2010 programme contains no planned projects.

## 9. INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

In February 2009, the EuSANH-ISA (Improving Science Advice for Help) project was officially launched. This project, which will continue until February 2012, aims at providing the foundations on which the EuSANH network<sup>1</sup> (European Science Advisory Network for Help) will function. Apart from the first annual meeting in Poland, where the progress made on each works package will be presented, the programme for 2010 also contains the finalising of the Policy Analysis report and the Thematic Analysis report. Both analyses will enable us, on the one hand, to sketch the profile of a scientific advisory body (like the SHC) and thus to provide the foundations of an ideal structure for such organisations and, on the other, to sketch the profile of a scientific advisory report, which will in turn allow us to evolve towards issuing advice on a European level in the future. Also, a great deal of time will be devoted to devising a common methodology for writing scientific advisory reports on public health issues.

Moreover, in 2010, the SHC will attempt to increase the number of its members as well as give further thought to the management, communication and collaboration structure of the network outside the time frame of the EuSANH-ISA project (February 2012). This safeguards the existence of the EuSANH network.

<sup>1</sup> EuSANH is a network of European scientific advisory councils concerned with public health. Twelve European advisory councils are currently (October 2009) members of the network and it is expected that more national advisory councils will join in the near future.



## 10. CONTACT PERSONS PER AREA

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**2010**  
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