



**Superior
Health Council**



**WORK PROGRAMME 2014
SUPERIOR HEALTH COUNCIL OF BELGIUM**

[HRS - Planned and Ongoing Projects \(POPs database\)](#)

INTRODUCTORY

The 2014 work programme offers a survey of the activities that will be undertaken by the Superior Health Council (SHC) over the period extending from 1 January to 31 December 2014. The first ten chapters focus on the various dossiers for each of the specific fields of activity of the SHC, viz.

1. *mental health and psychosocial factors;*
2. *physical environmental factors (ionising radiation, non-ionising radiation);*
3. *chemical agents;*
4. *nutrition and health, including food safety (NHFS) and food microbiology;*
5. *blood and blood products;*
6. *cells, tissues and organs of human and animal origin;*
7. *vaccination, infectiology and infection control during care;*
8. *cosmetology and cosmetic devices, including cosmetic surgery;*
9. *Public Health Genomics (PHG);*
10. *miscellanea and multidisciplinary groups.*

Chapter 11 will be devoted to taking stock of the ongoing co-operation at the national and international level.

11. *national (Belgian Health Research System – HRS) and international co-operation (EuSANH, EFSA, JPI, etc).*

Finally, chapter 12 will provide, for each field of activity, the main contact information of the internal scientific staff in charge of the requests for advice or projects that are carried out on the SHC's own initiative.

12. *scientific contact information per field of activity.*

The activities mentioned in these ten fields of activity can be subdivided into three categories, viz.

- **“ongoing activities”**: *Projects which are expected to be finalised in 2014 or 2015;*
- **“ongoing permanent activities”**: *Recurring activities of the SHC;*
- **“planned projects”**: *New projects that the SHC is planning on its own initiative;*

The **“ongoing activities”** concern dossiers which are already being treated and will continue to be dealt with or will be finalised during 2014. This concerns both requested advisory reports (select or confidential advisory reports) and advisory reports issued on the SHC's own initiative (projects) which were initiated before January 1st, 2014. It will be possible to finalise several of these activities before the end of the programme period. As a result, there will be time created for the **“planned projects”**. However, it is not always possible to foresee when the SHC can start working on the projects which it carries out on its own initiative, as it may have to deal with other priorities first or it may receive new requests for advice which are both unexpected and urgent. There may, therefore, be some changes in the

priorities and deadlines for publication during this period, in close consultation with the competent authorities. The "**ongoing permanent activities**" describe the recurring activities of the SHC. They sometimes result in an advisory report within the period under discussion, but this is not systematically the case. What is meant here are a number of requests or recurring activities such as "Novel Foods", requests for substantial equivalence, second-line biocide dossiers, food supplements, vaccination programmes, etc. In addition, there is, for each field of activity, a think-tank whose purpose it is to concentrate now and again on the public health issues that we have (or will have) to deal with. The activities of these think-tanks also belong to this category.

In the light of the January 2010 report from the Court of Auditors on the "scientific support to federal health policy" (www.rekenhof.be), the SHC takes an active part in all initiatives aimed at improving the coordination between the main Belgian parties involved. In January 2011, the first action was taken in response to this report, viz. the launching of a project aimed at creating a common database that should enable these different institutions to exchange their work programmes. In 2012 and 2013, the initial project was extended and it will grow even further with the release of an electronic database common to the 5 partners of the Belgian Health Research System (HRS). Each institution will be able to enter its ongoing projects online. Using a common taxonomy, this tool will make it possible to look for synergies and complementarities between research activities of the partners. The SHC is looking forward to that significant progress and continues its work on the exchange of essential information.

In 2014, we will intensify our contacts with the IT departments that manage the database, the VDIC-library (Vesalius Documentation and Information Center) and communication departments of the FPS to extend the database to a common system for the publication of validated advisory reports. We would like to thank Ms Beatrice Toussaint as well as the other active members of the network for the energy they have devoted to this useful development of the project.

Table 1: the various activities of the SHC have also been subdivided into different categories, each of which has been assigned an individual colour code.

	<p><u>Advisory report in response to an external inquiry or national and/or international co-operation project</u> Significant deadline between +/- 6 months and 1 year, setting up of an expert group, review of the literature required, fixed agenda.</p>
	<p><u>Advisory report of the SHC on draft Royal Decrees issued by the Administration, Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC), Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) or the Advisory Committee on Biocides (CAB)</u> Short legal deadline: < 3 months, opinion of an expert group, no review of the literature, confidential, required by the Belgian legislation</p>
	<p><u>Urgent advisory report in response to an external inquiry via Open Consultation or postal mail</u> Short deadline : asap, parliamentary questions, opinion of a single or two experts via telephone or electronic mail, no review of the literature, no precise methodology</p>
	<p><u>Routine advisory reports on technical dossiers from the industry</u> Highly variable deadlines depending on the situation, opinion of an expert group on the dossier submitted by a company, confidential, no or brief review of the literature.</p>
	<p><u>Project on the SHC's own initiative</u> Desired deadline: 1 to 2 years, setting up of an expert group, full review of the literature and if possible, evidence based methodology, agenda may be flexible.</p>
	<p><u>SHC permanent think-tank on public health and on one of the SHC's 9 fields of activity</u> Permanent activity or follow-up of scientific and political current events in the field under discussion, setting out of a long-term vision, drawing up and validation of projects.</p>
	<p><u>Planned project on the SHC's own initiative</u> Not started yet</p>

Table 2: quick summary and overview of the Planned and Ongoing Projects (POPs)

mental health	radiations	chemicals	food	blood	tissue banks	infectiology	cosmetics	genomics	varia
aging, dementia	Yttrium-90 Radioembolisation	acids and bases	iodine and diet	PRT - Chikungunya and West Nile virus	tissue banks, infection control	Rotavirus	aluminium	n.i. prenat. screening	
child prevention	Handheld X-Rays	acrylonitrile	milk products	encephalopathy, bovine spongiform	tissue banks, bacteria	Meningococcal B new vaccine	slimming equipment	think-tank public health genomics	
think-tank mh	233Ra treatment	legionella	milk banks	donor selection vCJD	infection control perinatal	High-risk patients	tattooing, ink	chronic disease screening	
	nuclear safety	biocides (CAB)	nutritional requirements	west nile virus (NAT)	think-tank cells, tissues and organs safety	FAQ "anti- vaccine"	addictive behavior	pharmacogenetics	
	fukushima - Radioactive Hazard Release	chemicals (Royal Decrees)	biogenic amines	massive hemorrhage	uterus transplantation	Vaccination programmes	Melanotan II		
	think-tank ionizing radiation	agrochemicals (indoor exposure)	criteria NMW	donor selection (neoplasms)	xenotransplantati on infection control	Vaccination Influenza	coloured lenses		
	transcranial magnetic stimulation	air pollution, indoor	Food Irradiation	think-tank blood and blood transfusion safety		Mumps	artificial eyelashes		
	4G	sustainable development (public health)	novel foods	Revision Good transfusion practices		Meningococcal infections	think-tank cosmetics		
	think-tank nonionizing radiation	think-tank chemical agents	dietary supplements			legionella	UV		
			natural mineral water			streptococcal beta antigen			
			think-tank food			CPE review			
			think-tank food microbiology			MDRO			
						think-tank infection control during care			
						urinary infections control			

Chapter 1

MENTAL HEALTH AND PSYCHOSOCIAL FACTORS

Chair : Prof. Jacques DE MOL
Scientific staff : Ms. Sylvie GERARD

In the field of mental health, the working groups issue advisory reports, recommendations or reports on health issues that are totally or partially related to individual behaviour, group behaviour or life in society (psychosocial factors). The aim is to issue recommendations for policy decisions in view of improving the manner in which these problems are dealt with, especially regarding:

- Children and youths (autism, behavioural disorders, ADHD, etc.);
- Elderly people;
- Risk behaviour, such as substance addiction (alcohol, tobacco etc.) and addictions linked to specific behaviours (pathological gambling).

The Mental Health group also examines psychosocial factors that cause, prolong or worsen health problems and focusses on the training of healthcare professionals in relation with these issues.

The group also increasingly carries out transversal work on psychosocial and ethical issues in other fields, such as PHG, tobacco, NHFS, cosmetology, vaccination, etc.

In 2013-2014, the working group would like to develop a work programme that most closely reflects the needs of the various stakeholders. They intend to do this by pinpointing the latter's priorities and needs in terms of advisory reports and recommendations. The Council will therefore call upon major stakeholders from this sector to identify the topics that are considered priority.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8877 - Project on efficiency of mental health care for children and youth: clinical paradigm versus population paradigm

Mental health problems among children and youths are not uncommon. The WHO estimates their prevalence at approximately 20 %. In addition, they appear to be highly persistent: according to the WHO, almost 50 % of mental health problems among adults started before the age of 14. There can therefore be no doubt that the whole community stands to benefit from efficient mental healthcare for children and youths that causes the prevalence of these problems to decrease. As the Superior

Health Council has done in its report on behavioural disorders among children and youths, the KCE report too recommends that attention should be paid not only to existing specific and specialised care as well as to investing in early detection, early intervention and specific target groups, but also to the development and use of general universal interventions. In Belgium, mental healthcare for youths, if available, mainly focuses on screening, early detection and the treatment of psychopathology (the so-called clinical paradigm). Moreover, prevention programmes are almost exclusively developed and offered on the basis of that same clinical paradigm centred on detection, early intervention and specific target groups.

Amongst other things, the ever increasing demand for specific and specialised care seems to confirm the suspicion that such a policy has no effect on the prevalence of mental health problems and psychopathology among children and youths.

On the other hand, there are indications that programmes based on the population paradigm, and which therefore target the population as a whole, may result in a decrease of the prevalence of mental health problems and psychopathology among children and youths.

The aim of this project is to gain knowledge on the "state of the art" in terms of effective care policies in the field of mental health problems and psychopathology among children and youths, and on the factors that are critically important for the potential efficiency of the care provided.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “prevention”, “mental health”, “child”, “public health”, “population”, “psychopathology”

Planning

2012			2013				2014		

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SHC 8890 - Dementia: national plan to address an ever-worsening plague

A WHO report on the problem of dementia in the world (Dementia: a public health priority) estimates that by 2050, the number of cases of dementia will have tripled. In this report, the authors express regret that only 20 to 50 % of the cases of dementia are diagnosed, and that when they are, it is often too late. It follows that early diagnosis is important, as well as raising public awareness about dementia disorders, reducing patient stigmatisation, improving patient and caregiver assistance, delaying institutional care, improving healthcare professional training in long-term clinical care. Besides the lack of information and understanding regarding dementia, which

often results in the social isolation of the patient, the first clinical signs should be described to enable early treatment, or even make a differential diagnosis, but also in order to provide optimal training to healthcare professionals in view of improving patient care.

More specifically, this advisory report will focus on the implementation of the Alcove (Alzheimer Cooperative Valuation in Europe) recommendations in Belgium regarding the epidemiological data on dementia, diagnosis, behavioural disorders, as well as the rights, autonomy and dignity of those suffering from dementia, and the risks linked to neuroleptic medication.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “dementia”, “diagnosis”, “epidemiology”, “alzheimer disease”, “treatment”, “Antipsychotic Agents”, “behavioral disorder”, “ethics”

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on mental health

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is difficult to predict what requests we may expect in the area of mental health and psychosocial factors in 2014. Still, there has been a permanent think-tank set up to follow-up on this issue.

The working group is also carrying out an increasing number of transversal activities on psychosocial and ethical issues in other fields, such as vaccination, PHG, tobacco, NHFS etc.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “mental health”, “public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “Bioethics”, “classification”, “diagnosis”, “history”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “prevention and control”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, think-tank.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

Contact: GERARD Sylvie (SG) - Sylvie.Gerard@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 42

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENTAL FACTORS

The task of the working groups in the physical agents area 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 reducing exposure ALARA (as low as reasonable achievable) 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

Chair ionising radiation: Prof. François JAMAR
Scientific staff : Ms. Veerle MERTENS

“Ongoing activities”: Confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8749 – Project on the Fukushima nuclear accident: Are any adverse health effects to be feared for the Belgian population? What are the lessons to be learned?

The severe damage sustained by the nuclear plants in Fukushima (Japan) as a result of the earthquake and the tsunami that followed it have triggered numerous and very diverse reactions throughout the media. Considering the concerns of the general public over the medical aspects of this issue in this country, it is appropriate to set the record straight and focus on questions like: What are the potential consequences for the Belgian population? Is there a danger of imported goods and foodstuffs being contaminated? What about a national action plan, radioactive iodine absorption prevention, and the unfortunate coinciding with the distribution campaign for iodine tablets? Etc.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “radiation, ionizing”, Fukushima, “radiation”, “radiation injuries”, “Radioactive Hazard Release”, “prevention and control”, “nuclear reactors”, “Chernobyl Nuclear Accident”, “education”, “radiologic health”, “air pollution, radioactive”, “food contamination, radioactive”, “water pollution, radioactive”, “Belgium”, “Radiation-Protective Agents”, “iodine compounds”, “neoplasms, radiation-induced”, “abnormalities, radiation-induced” , “radioactivity”, “safety”, “risk” perception, “health communication”, “air pollution, radioactive”, atmospheric dispersion.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 8929 – Yttrium-90 microspheres

The SHC has been requested by the FANC to formulate an advisory report about Yttrium-90 microspheres. Yttrium-90 microspheres are used for the intra-arterial treatment of primary and secondary malignant liver tumours. This form of treatment involves small microspheres (20-60 µm) made from non-degradable biocompatible material and loaded with Yttrium-90, a beta-emitter (physical half-life 64h, Eβmax 2MeV). It was introduced over 10 years ago and has proven safe in experienced hands, as shown in several phase I and II studies. To date, randomized clinical trials are still scarce and ongoing. These radiolabelled microspheres were introduced in Europe as a medical device and there are currently no definite restrictions on their use, which does, however, raise a number of questions.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Yttrium-90”, “Radioembolisation”, “Progressive disease”, “Liver metastasis”, “adverse events”, “hepatocellular carcinoma”,

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

Contact: MERTENS Veerle (VM) – veerle.mertens@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 51

SHC 9103 – Conditions and justification for the use of Handheld X-Ray Units

The SHC has been requested by the FANC to formulate an advisory report about the use of handheld X-ray units. The manufacturers of these types of devices have extended their scope to other target groups, such as dental and veterinary practices. Most of these devices bear CE marking and comply with international quality standards. Various studies show that, in theory, these devices are equivalent to traditional X-ray equipment, provided they are used correctly. Yet the use of these devices has raised a number of questions. The FANC therefore requests an advisory report on the scope of their applications and the proper use of such devices.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “X-Rays”, “adverse effects”, “Radiation Dosage”, “Radiography”, “Scattering, Radiation”

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

Contact: MERTENS Veerle (VM) – veerle.mertens@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 51

SHC 9138 – Justification and optimisation of [²³³Ra]-RaCl₂ (α-mitters) treatment.

The SHC has been requested by the FANC to formulate an advisory report about the use of [²³³Ra]-RaCl₂ (α-emitters) therapy. This molecule is already being used in several countries, but only within the context of clinical trials. Allowing its distribution implies that, for the first time in Belgium, an alpha-emitting radiopharmaceutical could be used in clinical practice. The FANC requests an advisory report on the justification for this new type of treatment as well as on how to optimise it.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “²³³Ra”, “bone metastases”, “metastatic castrate-resistant prostate cancer”, “radionuclide therapy”, “radium-233”, “therapeutic use”.

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: Confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on ionising radiation

The think-tank meetings provide the opportunity to gather the available expertise on most of the topics of interest, including radiation safety in medicine and industry, radioecology, medical applications, including novelties, the handling and disposing of nuclear waste, the epidemiology of and possible relationships with radiation exposure, etc. During such meetings, topics of national interest are discussed and the future work programme for this field of activity is outlined, if necessary, together with representatives of the section non-ionising radiation. Furthermore, documents presented at the international level (eg. EURATOM art 31 workgroup, UNSCEAR or ICRP) are discussed informally by the representatives concerned and the meeting participants. Accordingly, the experts are also dedicated to discussing national legislation, especially requests by the FANC/AFCN for changes in various regulatory Royal Decrees, or to examining matters deemed important by official bodies. Finally, the meetings make it possible to provide feedback to Belgian experts at international level and vice-versa.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “radiation, ionizing”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “diagnosis”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”,

“diagnostic use”, “instrumentation”, “methods”, “therapeutic use”, “utilization”, “radiologic health”, “radiation protection”, “adverse effects”, “radiations dosage”, “radiation effects”, “radioactive hazard release”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, think-tank, “radioactivity”, “safety”, “risk” perception, “health communication”, “air pollution, radioactive”.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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Inquiries submitted to the SHC on draft Royal Decrees

The SHC does not know beforehand what inquiries 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) modifying the RD of 20 July 2001 (General regulations regarding the protection of the population, workers and environment against the danger of ionising radiation, RGPRI). As a matter of fact, the Federal Agency for Nuclear Control (FANC) is currently revising the RGPRI and each modification will be submitted to the SHC for advice.

Thus, with numerous advisory reports finalised in 2011, the Superior Health Council is currently examining a request for advice on a draft Royal Decree.

Among other things, the working group is currently focussing on the issue of solid radioactive waste. The increasing use of technology that produces solid radioactive waste (nuclear medicine, power stations, etc.) 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 start in (2014, as soon as the questions that have priority and ongoing projects are about to be finalised.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “radiation, ionizing”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “classification”, “diagnosis”, “history”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”, “diagnostic use”, “instrumentation”, “methods”, “therapeutic use”, “utilization”, “radiologic health”, “radiation protection”, “adverse effects”, “radiations dosage”, “radiation effects”, “radioactive hazard release”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “think-tank”, “radioactivity”, “safety”, “risk” perception, “health communication”, “air pollution, radioactive”, atmospheric dispersion.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: New planned projects

None

2B. Non-ionising radiation.

Chair non ionizing radiations: Prof. Luc VERSCHAEVE

Scientific staff : M. Eric JADOUL

“Ongoing activities”: Confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8778 – Inquiry on Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS)

Transcranial magnetic stimulation (TMS) is “ a noninvasive method to cause depolarization or hyperpolarization in the neurons of the brain. TMS uses electromagnetic induction to induce weak electric currents using a rapidly changing magnetic field; this can cause activity in specific or general parts of the brain with minimal discomfort, allowing the functioning and interconnections of the brain to be studied. A variant of TMS, repetitive transcranial magnetic stimulation (rTMS), has been tested as a treatment tool for various neurological and psychiatric disorders including migraines, strokes, Parkinson's disease, dystonia, tinnitus, depression and auditory hallucinations.” (<http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/mesh/68050781> and http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Transcranial_magnetic_stimulation, 12.12.2011)

The Minister requests an advisory report on the following issues:

- the safety of the technology as regards long and short term medical hazards at both the neuro(psycho)logical and the systemic level, especially as regards any potential risks for pregnant women and unborn children;
- the existing evidence concerning the proposed therapeutic applications;
- the necessary expertise and qualifications that a healthcare practitioner needs to possess to implement TMS;
- the issues pertaining to the facilities and conditions in which TMS is to be implemented, as well the qualitative requirements that need to be met, both in a conventional medical setting as well as for research purposes.

“MeSH terms” or key words: “radiation, non-ionising”, “Transcranial Magnetic Stimulation”, “abnormalities, radiation-induced”, “adverse effects”, “radiation effect”, “radiation dosage”, “radiation tolerance”, “diagnostic use”, “psychology”, “therapeutic use”, “pregnant women”, “embryonic structures”, “embryo, mammalian”, “foetus”, “contraindications”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “education”, “training”, “professional competence”, “quality assurance, health care”, “quality control”, “mental health”, “depression”, “depressive disorder”, “nervous system diseases”, “mental disorders”, “migraine disorders”, “stroke”, “Parkinson’s disease”, “dystonia”, “tinnitus”, “hallucinations”, “biomedical technology”, “safety”, “equipment safety”, “

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 8927 - Evaluation of 4G technology

- What are "4G" systems compared to current mobile phone systems?
- Can 4G systems be deployed in accordance with the current standards applicable in Belgium (Flanders, Wallonia, Brussels)?
- What changes should be made in order to deploy 4G systems (changes to the network or standards) without prejudice to public health?
- Is there a health hazard for the population that is specifically linked to 4G systems?

“MeSH terms” or key words: “radiation, non ionising”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “classification”, “diagnosis”, “history”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”, “diagnostic use”, “instrumentation”, “methods”, “therapeutic use”, “radiations dosage”, “radiation effects”, “prevention and control”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, think-tank.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: Confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on non-ionising radiation

At the moment, the working group in charge of non-ionising radiation does not have any recurring permanent activities, except for the meetings of the think-tank.

“MeSH terms” or key words: “radiation, non ionising”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “classification”, “diagnosis”, “history”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”, “diagnostic use”, “instrumentation”, “methods”,

“therapeutic use”, “radiations dosage”, “radiation effects”, “prevention and control”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, think-tank.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

Contact: JADOUL Eric (E) - Eric.Jadoul@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 44

“Planned projects”: New planned projects

None

CHEMICAL AGENTS

Chair : Prof. Luc HENS

Scientific staff : Ms. Marleen VAN DER BRANDE

The working party assesses questions concerning the risks of exposure to chemical agents. In addition, the party also deals with other health issues of substances in the workplace and in the environment. Finally, the working group takes initiatives on a range of environmental health aspects.

Evaluating the risk of pesticides and biocides is now a partial competence of the European Commission. As a result, the SHC fulfils a second-line role and acts as an appeal panel for firms not agreeing with the advice of the Advisory Committee on Biocides (CAB), which is part of the Administration of the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8717 – Project on residential indoor exposure to insecticides

Residential indoor exposure to insecticides has, until now, been assumed of minor importance as compared to occupational exposure (farm workers, sprayers, workers, etc.). However, this chronic residential exposure is a potential risk. This project addresses this issue in 4 main ways:

1. Establishing an inventory of the pesticides and biocides used: quantities, users, locations, etc.
2. Identifying the problematic situations:
 - a. Pointing to potential “hot spots”
 - b. Identifying vulnerable groups for specific treatments
3. A risk-assessment for these routes of exposure:
 - a. Traditional toxicological approach (exceeding toxicological standards including ADI, AOEL, etc.)
 - b. Risks on carcinogenic and pseudo-oestrogenic effects
4. Conclusions and suggestions on improving public health. Next to the extended science-policy advice, the outcome of this project entails a document for general dissemination providing practical advice to the “average citizen” on how to reduce the residential exposure to pesticides.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: chemicals, chemical agents, “pesticides”, biocides, “agrochemicals”, “environmental exposure”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “classification”, “poisoning”, “supply and distribution”, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “toxicity tests”, “water pollution, chemical”, “air pollution”, “air pollution, indoor”, “environmental pollution”, “water pollutants, chemical”, “ecotoxicology”, “environment”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, “standards”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “public health”, “education”

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 8794 – Project on chemical and microbiological pollutants found in the indoor air in Belgium

Indoor air contains a wide variety of pollutants. The range and number of pollutants found indoors is wider than the pollutants in the outdoor air. Moreover the concentration levels are often higher. As people spend 85% of their time indoor, most exposure to air pollution actually occurs indoors. Indoor air pollution is therefore an important environmental factor and a significant determinant of health. Global trends in sustainability, resulting in more energy efficient and better insulated dwellings and buildings with controlled ventilation, may have an important additional effect in the near future. In view of these considerations, there is a need for advice and recommendations on how reducing the adverse health effects of indoor air pollution. The aim of the proposed review is:

- Providing an overview of the expertise available in Belgium as well as of the published scientific literature on the subject (projects, papers, proceedings);
- Highlighting the areas for which the scientific knowledge is still limited as well as the future requirements for an integrated (environment – energy - buildings) policy needs in Belgium ;
- Offering advice on measures towards reducing the health impact of indoor air pollution for the overall population.

“MeSH terms” or key words: chemicals, chemical agents, “environmental pollutants”, “air pollutants”, “environmental exposure”, “adverse effects”, “poisoning”, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “toxicity tests”, “air pollution”, “air pollution, indoor”, “environmental pollution”, “ecotoxicology”, “environment”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, “standards”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “public health”, “education”, “review”, Belgium, “policy”.

Planning

2012			2013				2014		

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SHC 8857 - Transversal project: public health priorities in relation with sustainable development (Sustainable Development and Public Health)

Each of the working parties of the SHC were invited mentioning their priorities and challenges regarding this issue under coordination of the Chemical Agents group.

The goal of the project is to analyze the important health tendencies on the long term for sustainable development in Belgium.

Currently advice on “Sustainable development and public health: a long-term analysis” is under preparation. The advisory report entails 7 sections:

1. Introduction: problem formulation, aims
2. Demography defeats
3. Food and sustainable development
4. Air pollution and climate changes
5. Environmental chemicals
6. Psychic conditions
7. Conclusions, mitigation measures

Core aspects of the advice were presented during the 2013 general assembly of the SHC.

“MeSH terms” or key words: “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “Belgium”, “legislation”, “trends”, “adverse effects”, “methods”, “prevention and control”, “risk assessment”, “sustainable development”, “environment”, long term, “case studies”, “policy”, “policy making”, “policy” instrument .

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The final document will be assessed by the different working parties of the SHC.

Planning

2012			2013				2014		

SHC 9108 – Inquiry concerning health risks of acids and alkalines

The SHC has been invited by the Minister of Public Health investigating which alkalines, acids and their mixtures might cause significant risk when sold to the general public and which additional measures and conditions for selling to public at large are recommended.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “acids”, bases, consumers, incidents, chemicals, chemical agents, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “prevention and control”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “policy”, “classification”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 9126 – Inquiry concerning the follow-up of the train disaster in Wetteren

The SHC has been invited by the Minister of Public Health formulating an advice on the interpretation of the results of the bio-monitoring studies which were performed in following up the train disaster in Wetteren. The opportunity of a longitudinal population screening on possible long term should be assessed. This advisory report should include as well an analysis of the psycho-social impacts of such an accident, and result in recommendations for general practitioners concerning the individual follow-up of the exposed persons. Concrete recommendations for local policy makers concerning possible initiatives linked to the psycho-social impact of such an accident should be as well included in the advisory report.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: train “disaster”, “acrylonitrile”, bio monitoring, medical follow-up, psychosocial follow-up, psychological follow-up, population screening, chemicals, chemical agents, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “prevention and control”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

Inquiries submitted to the SHC on draft Royal Decrees

The working party prepares draft advisory reports submitted by the Federal Authorities within the framework of the Law of 21 December 1998 regarding product standards aimed at promoting sustainable production and consumption patterns as well as protecting the environment, public health and the workers.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: chemicals, chemical agents, “Conservation of Natural Resources”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “occupational exposure”, “manpower”, “risk assessment”, “Consumer Product Safety”, “Product Labelling”, “Belgium”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “standards”, “adverse effects”, “economics”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “supply and distribution”, “prevention and control”, “education”

Planning: Permanent activity

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SHC dossiers on “appeal procedures” for biocides (CAB)

Biocides producing companies can object the decisions of the Advisory Committee on Biocides (CAB) and lodge an appeal to the Minister and the Administration (RD of 22.05.2003). The SHC is the competent authority dealing with such appeals within a defined period of time and according to a legally determined procedure. In 2013, 3 appeal procedures were submitted to the SHC.

“MeSH terms” or key words: chemicals, chemical agents, “pesticides”, biocides, “disinfectants”, “agrochemicals”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “environmental exposure”, “occupational exposure”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “classification”, “poisoning”, “supply and distribution”, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, “toxicity tests”, “environmental pollution”, “ecotoxicology”, “environment”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, “standards”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”.

Planning: Permanent activity

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SHC permanent think-tank on chemical agents

The permanent think-tank in charge of chemical agents meets on a regular basis to discuss the follow-up of the working groups and to provide advice on draft Royal Decrees. Based on current events, it also looks at new issues worth examining and submits new projects.

“MeSH terms” or key words: chemicals, chemical agents, “Chemicals and Drugs Category”, “inorganic chemicals”, “organic chemicals”, “agrochemicals”, “pesticides”, biocides, “disinfectants”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “economics”, “education”, “epidemiology”, “ethics”, “classification”, “diagnosis”, “history”, “Belgium”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “manpower”, “methods”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”, “methods”, “prevention and control”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “risk assessment”, “toxicity”, “toxicology”, think-tank.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: *new planned projects*

None

NUTRITION AND HEALTH, INCLUDING FOOD SAFETY (NHFS) AND FOOD MICROBIOLOGY

Chair Nutrition and Health, Including Food Safety (NHFS): Prof. Guy DE BACKER
Scientific staff : Ms. Michèle ULENS & Ms. Anouck WITTERS

The standing NHFS working group is tasked with many missions. The group provides advice to the FPS Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (<http://www.health.belgium.be/eportal>) regarding its food policy. These recommendations are put to good use by projects such as the NFHP-B (National Food and Health Plan for Belgium), as they provide the scientific foundation for some of their actions. The group also issues advice on food supplements, on the labelling of marketed products and the corresponding food and health claims, as well as on the characteristics of products such as special foods meeting the particular nutritional requirements of specific population groups (called “special foods” or “dietary foods”).

In addition, the working group carries out risk assessments (e.g. additives, chemical or microbiological pollutants, novel foods or novel ingredients, food contact materials, approval of natural mineral waters, etc.) as part of the standardization policy of the FPS with respect to food safety.

The NHFS working group is part of the European Food Safety Authority's (EFSA) network of organizations active in the fields that fall within the EFSA's remit pursuant to EC Regulation 178/2002.

Chair Food Microbiology : Prof. Georges DAUBE
Scientific staff : M Jean-Jacques DUBOIS

In this area, the SHC experts address issues pertaining to food microbiology. Through its activities, the working group is directly involved in the regulating of and the providing information on the microbiological safety of food.

The working group " Food Microbiology " cooperates in a practical and effective way with the FPS department " Food, animal feed and other consumer products" (“Denrées alimentaires, aliments pour animaux et autres produits de consommation”) in order to :

- contact the experts involved in certain areas (within the context of the activities of the Codex Alimentarius) and disseminate very specific information in an appropriate way ;
- be kept informed of the steps taken by the FPS (at the European level) based on the SHC advisory reports, e.g. Rapid Alert System for Food and Feed (RASFF) or requests from the EFSA Panel on Biological Hazards BIOHAZ;
- provide any possible form of necessary scientific support to the authorities of our country for all aspects related to this issue.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8734 – Inquiry concerning an advice on the benefits of breastfeeding for preterm infants which implies a slight risk of contamination

The Minister of Public Health has submitted an inquiry to the SHC concerning the Bill on milk banks introduced by Ms Christine DEFRAIGNE.

This inquiry concerns a bill on human milk banks that has been submitted to the Senate. It aims at assessing the appropriateness of such legislation and at making potential comments on this bill.

Before possibly adopting a bill on this subject, it seems preferable to obtain at first scientific consensus on the different means and possibilities of monitoring and processing:

- 1/ milk offered by a mother to her own child staying in a neonatal care unit;
- 2/ milk offered by a mother (called "mercenary") to another child than her own staying in a neonatal care unit;
- 3/ human milk put at the disposal of children outside a hospital setting.

A first advisory report will be delivered which will provide guidelines on the first issue, then a second report will examine the two remaining issues, this time in order to formulate recommendations.

In order to draw up this advisory report, nutrition and paediatrics specialists drew upon the expertise of several parties involved in the field of breastfeeding (Federal Breastfeeding Committee, Baby Friendly Hospital Initiative, etc.). Adopting a policy of offering human milk to newborns (regardless of whether or not they are staying in a hospital) is indeed an integral part of the breastfeeding promotion policy conducted in maternity clinics, neonatal centres of all kinds and in general among the public.

The need for a bill on milk banks and the legal provisions being considered directly depend on the concerted integration of hygiene and nutritional requirements on one hand, and public health policies promoting breastfeeding on the other.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Milk Banks”, “Milk, Human”, “Milk”, “Milk Substitutes”, “risk assessment”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Reference Standards”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Pregnant Women”, “Women's Health Services”, “Infant, Newborn”, “Infant, Low Birth Weight”, “Infant, Small for Gestational Age”, “Infant, Very Low Birth Weight”, “Infant, Postmature”, “Infant, Premature”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “toxicity”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “economics”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “public health”, “education”, “prevention and control”, “therapeutic use”.

Planning

First advisory report : providing guidelines on the first issue.

2011			2012			2013			2014		

Second report: the two other issues with the purpose, this time, of laying down recommendations.

2014			2015			2016			2017		

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SHC 8776 - Project on the issue of biogenic amines (with histamine-like effects) in food

There have been reports of concern over histamines and other biogenic amines that could be the source of food-borne bacterial infections. A textbook example is the growth of Enterobacteriaceae in canned tuna after opening. Histamines and other amines with histamine-like effects may also be formed in many other foodstuffs. Some foodstuffs (fish, fine meat products, beer, etc.) can be affected by microbial breakdown (e.g. spoilage), which results in the production of heat-resistant amines. The resulting bacterial infections cause a whole range of symptoms (such as e.g. skin reactions, respiratory problems and heart failure) that resemble those that are triggered by exposure to histamines. Most cases require hospitalisation. For some outbreaks, the epidemiological studies have shown that raw vegetables are the probable cause. Bacteriological research confirms the presence of large numbers of Enterobacteriaceae on raw vegetables, but only low amounts of histamines have been detected (mg/kg). It is likely that there are also other biogenic amines involved. It would therefore be useful to collect the available data on the breakdown that results in the development of these amines. As part of the consultative Forum, the Netherlands have presented the results of a study on biogenic amines in foodstuffs, more precisely in European cheeses (2,000 samples and over 1,000 ppm in some cheeses). The BIOHAZ-panel is looking into this question. It would therefore be advisable to examine the issue of biogenic amines (with histamine-like effects).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “food chain”, “risk assessment”, “biogenic amines”, “histamine”-like effect, “enterobacteriaceae”, “bacterial infections”, “gram-negative bacterial infections”, “enterobacteriaceae infections”, “food microbiology”, “food contamination”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation, food”, “food, preserved”, “food-processing industry”, “food technology”, “food industry”, “food inspection”, “food preservatives”, “food packaging”, “food handling”, “food analysis”, “food safety”, “adverse effects”, “toxicity”, “toxicity tests”, “economics”,

“prevention and control”, “gastroenteritis”, “epidemiology”, “microbiology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “education”.

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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SHC 8894 – Project on the review of the criteria to accept the health claim on natural mineral waters “suitable for the preparation of infants food”

The permanent working group NHFS (Nutrition and Health including Food Safety) is regularly tasked with analyzing application files in relation with the bringing on the market of mineral waters or with the use of the claim « suitable for the preparation of infant foods ».

The SHC applies the following criteria, which are not regulatory but indicative :

- high and constant microbiological purity
- dry residue <500 mg/l (drinking water <1500)
- nitrates < 25 mg/l (drinking water < 50)
- nitrites < 0.1 mg/l (drinking water < 0.1)
- sodium < 50 mg/l (drinking water ~r 150)
- fluoride < 1 mg/l (drinking water < 1.5)

The claim « suitable for the preparation of infant foods » does not aim at favouring one brand of « natural mineral water » over « public distribution water » delivered under appropriate conditions, but rather at identifying, among the various natural mineral waters, which are the ones that are suitable for that purpose.

In France, the same criteria are used, but further characteristics were added a year ago, such as calcium.

To determine whether calcium is an element that needs to be taken into account, an expert group should meet to assess whether it is necessary to introduce this new criterion and to propose recommendations to the Minister, in all likelihood when a specific application is made.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “mineral waters”, natural mineral water, artificial mineral water, spring water, “water”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 8913 – Inquiry concerning the strategies to increase the iodine intake in Belgium - Evaluation and Recommendations

The standing NHFS working group has set up an ad hoc working group tasked with examining a request for an advisory report from the FPS HFCSE on various issues relating to the assessment and monitoring of marginal iodine deficiency in Belgium.

Many initiatives have been taken in Belgium over the last twenty years with the intent of providing a better characterisation of the iodine status of the population and of correcting it by adopting various measures aimed at improving the information provided to the medical profession and public on this state of deficiency and the means of curbing the latter. As part of the National Food and Health Plan, protocols for two studies on the current iodine status of two Belgian population groups (pregnant women and children) were developed on the one hand whilst, on the other, a moderate iodine enrichment plan for baking salt was drawn up.

With both studies completed, the FPS, anxious to take stock of these actions whilst placing them in a broader context and eager to consider future avenues to pursue in the interest of public health, requested the SHC to shed scientific light on the following points:

- Provide an evaluation of the results of these two recent studies;
- Place them within a broader context, especially by taking into account all the studies and actions taken in this regard in Belgium in order to have a detailed appraisal of the observed developments.
- Provide an evaluation of the current risk of iodine deficiency ;
- The means that need to be implemented, if necessary, to normalize the iodine status in Belgium;
- Provide a description of the type of monitoring required to follow-up on or describe the actions that need to be taken.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “iodine”, “diet”, thyroid hormones”, “hypothyroidism”, “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”.

Planning :

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8918 – Inquiry concerning the place milk and milk products in a balanced diet

The NHFS standing working group has set up an ad hoc working group tasked with examining a request for an advisory report from the Minister of Public Health that assesses the appropriateness of recommending the consumption of milk and dairy products as part of a balanced diet.

The applicant considers this advisory report important, especially given the different dietary models (actieve voedingsdriehoek, pyramide alimentaire, i.e. food pyramid, ...) that are used in this country to issue practical recommendations for the population, expressed in terms of recommended dietary intakes.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “milk”, “milk products”, “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”.

Planning :

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 9149 – Inquiry concerning an advisory report on the presence of arsenic in dietary supplements and algae

In July 2000, the SHC issued an advisory report (SHC 6976) on the heavy metals cadmium, lead, arsenic and mercury in dietary supplements. On the basis of this advisory report, maximum levels were set for metals in dietary supplements, including a maximum level for dietary supplements of 1 mg (total) arsenic per product. In the meantime, the national maximum levels for cadmium, mercury and lead have been replaced by European maximum levels; however, the arsenic levels have not yet been harmonised at the European level.

Yet various parties have raised questions regarding the national maximum level for arsenic.

At the request of DG4, the SHC will issue an advisory report in which it will seek to determine which forms (organic / inorganic) of arsenic in dietary supplements are liable to affect public health as well as the risks entailed. More specifically, the advisory report will consider the potential risks (linked to arsenic and possibly other metals) in the event of a regular or high consumption of algae/seaweed.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “arsenic”, “organic/inorganic”, “algae”, “seaweed”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “dietary supplements”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”, “food industry”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “toxicity”, “prevention and control”.

Planning :

2013				2014				2015			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC “Novel foods” - Confidential advisory reports on “Novel Foods” (first-line, second-line, substantial equivalence)

The SHC has been requested to issue advice on new ingredients or foodstuffs for several years now. We can therefore predict that a series of requests for advice of this kind will be submitted to us in 2014 as well. In 2013, 5 second-line evaluations (i.e. following the initial assessment report drawn up by another Member State) were concluded with an advisory report. In addition, 2 evaluations of substantial equivalence (i.e. assessing the substantial equivalence to an approved “Novel Food”) were conducted and 14 new dossiers were introduced as well. At the moment, 11 second-line evaluations are pending (i.e. waiting for the initial assessment report drawn up by another Member State).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, novel “food”, substantial equivalence, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”, “food-processing industry”, “food technology”, “food industry”, “food microbiology”, “food contamination”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “economics”, “standards”, “supply and distribution”, “toxicity”, “prevention and control”.

Planning: Permanent activity

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SHC “Food supplements” – Confidential advisory reports on food supplements

There are currently 9 food supplement dossiers under examination.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “dietary supplements”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”, “food industry”, “food microbiology”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “economics”, “standards”, “supply and distribution”, “toxicity”, “prevention and control”.

Planning: Permanent activity

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SHC “Waters” – Confidential advisory reports on natural mineral water (NMW) and spring water (SW)

The authorisation for spring water to be labelled as “natural mineral water” as well as that for using the claim “suitable for the preparation of infant food” are submitted to the SHC for advice. No “natural mineral water” dossier is currently under examination.

In 2014, the SHC plans to review the criteria for obtaining the claim "suitable for the preparation of infant food" in cooperation with the French experts of ANSES (Agence nationale de Sécurité sanitaire de l'alimentation, de l'environnement et du travail). For more information, see also : SHC 8894 – Project on the review of the criteria to accept the health claim on natural mineral waters “suitable for the preparation of infants food”

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “mineral waters”, natural mineral water, artificial mineral water, spring water, “water”, “food safety”, “consumer product safety”, “food analysis”, “food inspection”, “nutritional requirements”, “nutrition policy”, “food industry”, “food microbiology”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “analysis”, “classification”, “economics”, “microbiology”, “parasitology”, “standards”, “supply and distribution”, “utilization”, “virology”, “food-processing industry”, “food technology”, “food industry”, “food packaging”, “food handling”, “prevention and control”.

Planning: Permanent activity

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SHC « Food Irradiation » - 8945

New requests from the FANC regarding an application submitted by a private firm for renewal of its license to irradiate certain foodstuffs (deadline June 2014) The SHC has a legal obligation to respond within 4 months.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food irradiation”, “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “food chain”, “risk assessment”, “food microbiology”, “food contamination”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation, food”, “food, preserved”, “food-processing industry”, “food technology”, “food industry”, “food inspection”, “food preservatives”, “food packaging”, “food handling”, “food analysis”, “food safety”,

Planning :

2014			2015			2016		

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SHC permanent think-tank on nutrition and health, including food safety (NHFS)

The permanent think-tank in charge of nutrition and health, including food safety meets on a monthly basis to discuss the activities of the different working groups in charge of the ongoing projects.

In addition, the permanent think-tank also issues advisory reports on products in response to a request from the Department "Food and other consumer products" of the FPS HFCSE. In most cases, the submitted dossiers contain confidential information about specific products.

The think-tank organises short presentations to inform its members on the results of recent studies, on topics in progress, etc. on a regular basis during its monthly meetings.

Based on current events and latest scientific developments, it looks at new issues worth examining and submits new projects.

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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SHC permanent think-tank on food microbiology

At the moment, the permanent think-tank in charge of food microbiology meets on a regular basis to discuss the follow-up of the working groups. Based on current events, it also looks at new issues worth examining and submits new projects.

Through this permanent think-tank, the SHC will reply, as from 2013, to questions from the FANC regarding the renewal (or not) of the license to irradiate certain foodstuffs (legal obligation, RD of 8 March 2012).

As this document is being drawn up, no final agreement has been reached regarding suggestions for projects in the field of "Food Microbiology".

"MeSH terms" or keywords: "food and beverages", "beverages", "food", "food chain", "risk assessment", "food microbiology", "food contamination", "Belgium", "legislation and jurisprudence", "legislation, food", "food, preserved", "food-processing industry", "food technology", "food industry", "food inspection", "food preservatives", "food packaging", "food handling", "food analysis", "food safety", "prevention and control", "epidemiology", "microbiology", "statistics and numerical data", "education".

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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"Planned projects": new planned projects

SHC xxxx – Project on the review of the nutritional recommendations for Belgium

The current recommendations are not final. Food science is dynamic, in permanent evolution, and the limits of contemporary science are continuously pushed forward. It follows that food recommendations should be reviewed on a regular basis in order to provide a more accurate reflection of the latest developments regarding the scientific knowledge on physiological effects and nutritional requirements.

With a view to improving the nutritional status of the Belgian population, this project aims to update the nutritional recommendations that are appropriate for the population in general, as well as those intended for each specific age group. Among other things, this recurring activity contributes to the prevention and reduction of "non communicable diseases".

The Nutritional recommendations for Belgium should be a reference and a source of up-to-date scientific information for every practising professional or teacher in the field of nutrition, and for managers in the food industry and the collective catering sector.

They concern recommended intakes of nutrients and form the required scientific basis for transposing them into recommended food intakes.

The permanent NHFS working group has made contacts with the Health Council of the Netherlands in view of setting up a form of cooperation, as the latter too is working on an update of its nutritional recommendations (Richtlijnen Goede Voeding).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “food and beverages”, “beverages”, “food”, “risk assessment”, “nutritional requirements”, “prevention and control”, “education”, “Belgium”, “legislation, food”, “nutrition policy”.

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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Chapter 5

BLOOD AND BLOOD PRODUCTS

Chair : Prof. Véronique DENEYS
Scientific staff : M Roland HÜBNER

In this area, the general mission of the SHC is to draw up and standardise good transfusion practices. This working group is unabatedly intent on reducing the risk of known or unknown infectious diseases being transmitted through blood transfusions to an absolute minimum. All aspects of transfusion are covered: thus, this group examines such issues as the eligibility criteria for donations, the screening for communicable diseases and the clinical indications for the various blood components. Within this framework, the working group also devotes special and continuous attention to the impact of its risk analysis on the efficient management of the limited resource that is donated blood. Moreover, improving transfusion practice is considered a necessity to ensure that, in the interest of the patients, the decisions made by clinicians are based on the latest available scientific data on this subject.

Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports – projects

SHC 8751 – Inquiry concerning methods for pathogen reduction in platelet concentrates (PRT) and Chikungunya - West Nile virus

In this country, pathogen reduction methods are applied to a significant portion of the platelet concentrates being prepared. These methods could also be effective against the West Nile and Chikungunya viruses, which would mean that there would be no need for a deferral period. The FAMHP has therefore requested an advisory report from the Superior Health Council on the question whether the existing pathogen reduction methods are also an effective means of reducing/inactivating these viruses and, if so, whether the deferral period is still necessary, provided the donation is only used to prepare pathogen-reduced platelet concentrates.

“MeSH terms” or key words: “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “blood safety”, “blood banks”, “blood donors”, “blood platelets”, “Platelet Transfusion”, “risk assessment”, pathogen reduction technique, PRT, “Anti-Infective Agents/pharmacology”, “Blood Platelets/virology”, “Blood-Borne Pathogens/drug effects”, “Blood-Borne Pathogens/radiation effects”, “DNA/drug effects”, “DNA/radiation effects”, “DNA Damage”, “Intercalating Agents/pharmacology”, “Platelet Activation/drug effects”, “Platelet Activation/radiation effects”, “RNA/drug effects”, “RNA/radiation effects”, “Ultraviolet Rays”, “virology”, “West Nile virus”, “Chikungunya virus”, “Humans”, “methods”, “organization and administration”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Belgium”, “statistics and numerical data”, “epidemiology”, “microbiology”

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8829 — Update of the advisory report on vCJD as regards blood donor exclusion criteria

This project will seek to update previous advisory reports (SHC No. 4818) in the light of new risk assessment data and an evaluation will be made of recent decision making processes for blood donation deferral.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “prions”, “Prion Diseases”, “Creutzfeldt-Jakob Syndrome”, “Encephalopathy, Bovine Spongiform”, “risk assessment”, (variant) Creutzfeldt-Jakob disease, “Blood Donors”, “Donor Selection”, “Tissue and Organ Harvesting”, “Tissue and Organ Procurement”, donor deferral, exclusion criteria, “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “Erythrocytes”, “Erythrocyte Transfusion”, “Blood Component Transfusion”, “Blood Safety”, blood component safety, “Infection Control”

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8830 — NAT-WNV implementation

Since 2010, Europe has witnessed an increase in the number of neuroinvasive cases caused by a West Nile virus (WNV) infection. The regions that are currently affected in Europe are the Balkans and Italy. The SHC advisory report No. 8696 assessed the effectiveness of pathogen reduction in platelet concentrates against WNV, but this technique is not available for the remaining blood components. Faced with the risk of WNV infections progressing even further in 2012, some Western European countries have decided to prepare for the implementation of genomic screening. With the legal framework for such a technique usually requiring 3 years to set up, this project simply aims at preparing the field, “just in case”.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “Erythrocytes”, “Erythrocyte Transfusion”, “Blood Component Transfusion”, “Blood Safety”, blood component safety, “Infection Control”, “virology”, “West Nile virus”, “West Nile Fever”, “Communicable Diseases, Emerging”, emerging diseases, “Genetic Techniques”, “Nucleic Acid Amplification Techniques”, “Nucleic Acids”, nucleic acid testing, screening

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8831— Expert meeting “Severe bleeding: from basics to practice”

The handbook on “Good transfusion practices for hospitals” (SHC No. 8381) stresses the importance of having a standard procedure to follow in case of massive haemorrhage. Indeed, at various emergency physician meetings, the attitude to take when faced with such situations is an important matter of debate. The use of fibrinogen is on the rise, as is the use of platelets. Moreover, anti-platelet products have been introduced, whilst aprotinin has disappeared. There are significant discrepancies in the use of FFP/RBC ratios (i.e. the number of plasma units to transfuse divided by the number of red cell concentrates). The SHC has therefore organised an expert meeting on this subject on 28 November 2013, which aimed at:

- Informing participants on state-of-the-art practical approaches in situations of massive haemorrhage;
- Assessing the efforts made towards determining the effectiveness of treatment initiatives during massive haemorrhage.

The presentations and panel discussions at the conference provide the required knowledge on the basis of which recommendations on patient (blood) management can be formulated.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Evidence-Based Emergency Medicine”, “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “Erythrocytes”, “Erythrocyte Transfusion”, red blood cell transfusion, administration of “plasma”, “fibrinogen” use, “plasma”, “fibrinogen”, “administration and dosage”, “utilization”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “intensive care”, “Hemorrhage”, haemorrhage

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8832— The permanent deferral of blood donors with a history of cancer

The current transfusion standards allow cancer survivors to donate blood only in exceptional cases. This project aims at carrying out a detailed analysis of the various arguments and data on the basis of which donor-candidates have been disqualified from giving blood by paying attention to the type of tumour(s) involved.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Neoplasms”, “Survivors”, cancer recurrence, “risk assessment”, “Blood Donors”, “Donor Selection”, “Tissue and Organ Harvesting”, “Tissue

and Organ Procurement”, donor deferral, exclusion criteria, “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “Erythrocytes”, “Erythrocyte Transfusion”, “Blood Component Transfusion”, “Blood Safety”, blood component safety

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on the quality of blood and blood transfusion safety

As this programme is being drawn up, it is difficult to predict what requests will be submitted to the SHC in 2014 in the area of transfusion and blood product safety. However, we do expect to receive new requests regarding blood donation by men-having-sex-with-other-men and a photochemical method for pathogen reduction in fresh-frozen plasma.

A permanent think-tank has been set up to follow-up on these issues and to determine which of the topics that will be tackled in 2014 will receive priority.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “blood donors”, “blood banks”, “risk assessment”, “blood safety”, “blood supply”, “manpower”, “methods”, “organization and administration”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “education”, “ethics”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, impact on supply chain management, “complications”, “economics”, “epidemiology”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “trends”, “utilization”, “microbiology”, “parasitology”, “virology”, think-tank

Planning: Permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: new planned projects

SHC xxxx - Project regarding the revision of the handbook on “Good transfusion practices for hospitals”

In the wake of the influenza pandemic 2009-2010, a circular was addressed to the hospitals with the aim of implementing the revised recommendations of the SHC on good transfusion practices in hospitals (SHC No. 8381). The time has come for the SHC to update its handbook on good transfusion practices for use by hospitals. This reference guide on the transfusion of blood components (red cells, platelets and plasma) provides a fundamental tool to all medical staff in hospitals. It aims to enhance the quality and safety of the transfusion chain within the hospitals in this country. The project will update the handbook in the light of new products and the latest developments, such as e.g. the usage of 0 Rh D negative red cell concentrates as well as amended legal requirements.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “blood”, “blood transfusion”, “blood donors”, “blood banks”, “risk assessment”, “blood safety”, “blood supply”, “manpower”, “methods”, “organization and administration”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “education”, “ethics”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “statistics and numerical data”, “supply and distribution”, impact on supply chain management, “complications”, “economics”, “epidemiology”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “trends”, “utilization”, “microbiology”, “parasitology”, “virology”

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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Chapter 6

CELLS, TISSUES AND ORGANS OF HUMAN AND ANIMAL ORIGIN

Chair : Prof. Hilde BEELE

Scientific staff : Ms. Muriel BALTES

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.

This group is also tasked with revising and amending the quality standards according to the new national and European regulations.

Finally, this group issues advisory reports on technical issues or procedures that provide the Administration with assistance in carrying out its regulatory function.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8143-8763-8785 Project on the inactivation and safety of cells and tissues with respect to prions, bacteria, and viruses

An in-depth review of the literature on the inactivation and safety of tissues and cells with respect to prions, viruses and bacteria during the removal and transplantation of tissues and cells was completed. This report is divided into three major sections: the first on prions (published in 2008, 8143), the second on bacteria and the third on viruses (published in 2012, 8785).

Bacteria: The report first deals with classification 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 (SHC 8763).

This review of the literature has made it possible to formulate practical recommendations aimed at preventing the transmission of viral infections (see SHC 8698).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “decontamination”, “sterilization”, “disinfection”, “tissue transplantation”, “culture techniques”, “communicable diseases”, “microbiology”.

Planning

2012	2013	2014
Prions OK (8143: 2008)		
Bacteria (8763)		
Viruses OK (8785: 2012)		

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SHC 8698 - Project on the microbiological aspects relating to the practice of banks for human body material

The working group “Cells, tissues and organs of human and animal origin”, which is tasked with drawing up the quality and safety norms (Act of 19 December 2008) for human body material, finds it necessary to re-examine the microbiological aspects of this issue (testing, safety), especially those that concern the harvesting and testing of human body material. These considerations will be looked at in a way that is fine-tuned to the different cells and tissues. These recommendations will, among other things, be based on SHC advisory report No. 8143, 8763 and 8785 (Inactivation and safety of cells and tissues with respect to prions, bacteria, and viruses), current practice and the requirements of the new national regulations.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “cells”, human, , “microbiology”, “bacteriology”, “cultures techniques”, “tissue transplantation”, “culture media”, “homograft dressing”, “bone-potellar tendon-bone allograft”, “tympanic membrane”, “amniotic membrane dressing”, “corneal transplantation”, “sclera”, “heart valve prosthesis”, “vascular grafting”

Planning

2012	2013	2014

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SHC 9151 – Project on biological testing for body material removed during the perinatal period

The working group wished to address the issue of biological tests to be carried out in the context of body material being removed during the perinatal period from live or deceased donors. The Royal Decree (RD) of 28 September 2009 describes, among other things, which biological tests are to be carried out on live and deceased donors. More precisely, as regards newborn donors, Annex VI, Section 2.8. of the R.D. states that "in the case of newborn donors, the biological tests may be performed on the donor's mother to spare the child from tests that are unnecessary from a medical point of view".

On the other hand, when collecting human body material from deceased donors, the biological tests must be performed on the donor's blood, in the case at hand, the blood of the deceased newborn. If the donor has passed away in utero, the biological testing shall be performed on the blood of the "baby", despite the fact that the latter may have been dead for several days.

Biological tests carried out on the deceased baby/newborn/foetus raise the following concerns: the reliability of the serological tests, their validity but also the quality of post-mortem blood (haemodilution) and the (low) quantity of blood that can be taken. This can affect the safety of the human body material. In this case, the experts wonder whether the blood should not be drawn from the mother, as is the case for live newborn donors.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Serologic tests”, “Infant, newborn”, “Infection”, human” “cells” “tissues”

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC standing working group on the safety of cells, tissues and organs of human and animal origin

The SHC expects to be consulted by the Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products (FAMHP) on all technical problems that arise during the inspection of banks for human body material. Considering the expertise of the SHC’s experts in this field, it is to be expected that the SHC will, on numerous occasions, be requested to issue advice in connection with more general problems of a technical nature.

The working group issues recommendations on its own initiative whenever any problems or inconsistencies arise during the revising of quality standards. It also responds to inquiries from the Minister (e.g. allogeneic cord blood use) and the Federal Public Service Public Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment.

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is not yet clear what requests can be expected this year in this area.

The SHC standing working group will also continue working on revising the quality standards for human body material, taking into account the new legislation that has recently come into force.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “cells”, “tissues”, organs, “tissue banks”, “tissue donors”, “Tissue and Organ Harvesting”, “organ preservation”, “tissue preservation”, “tissue and organ procurement”, “human body” material, “safety”, “transplantation”, “transplants”, “Reference Standards”, “standards”, “ethics”, “Disease Transmission, Infectious”.

Planning: Permanent activity

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“Planned projects”: new planned projects

Project: uterus transplantation. An advisory report will be drawn up in the course of 2014 on uterus transplantations. In doing so, the standing working group will be responding to an indirect request from the Cabinet as well as carrying out a wish of its own.

Project : Implants of animal origin. There is little or no information available on the origin of implants containing animal material, nor on the methods used to make them “safe”. The working group has therefore deemed it useful to draw up guidelines that are similar to quality standards for human body material and that lay down acceptable origins for the animals, any exclusions, the acceptable inactivation treatment methods, taking into account the different species.

VACCINATION, INFECTIOLOGY AND INFECTION CONTROL DURING CARE

As regards the area of vaccination, infectiology (emerging diseases) 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 standing working group on vaccination, which is tasked with issuing advisory reports and recommendations on vaccines, vaccination and vaccinology.

7A. Vaccination

Chair : Prof. Yves VAN LAETHEM
Scientific staff: Ms. Veerle MERTENS

The advisory reports and recommendations issued by the standing 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 a specific type of vaccine that is required for public health.

Updating the vaccination schedule involves the following recurrent activities:

Each year, the standing working group "vaccination" updates the vaccination schedule, if necessary, and communicates it to the inter-ministerial conference of health ministers. The working group is also responsible for approving the recommendations for travel medicine each year, as well as providing support for the view taken by the Belgian "health authorities" regarding all centrally registered vaccines (see scientific package inserts of the vaccines). Around October, the working group issues an advisory report in which it determines which are the priority groups for seasonal influenza vaccination.

The group is also responsible for the periodic updating of the technical sheets dedicated to each vaccination recommended in the basic schedule for children, teenagers and adults, as well as the sheets on catch-up vaccination or the rules of good vaccination practice. These sheets have been compiled in the form of a vaccination guide. They are assessed on a regular basis and adapted if necessary.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8561-8754-8803-8804 – Project concerning the vaccination of high-risk patients

This guide on complementary vaccination was drawn up in response to numerous questions from vaccinators. There is need for a condensed version of the guidelines for the vaccination of high-risk patients. A guide, intended for specialists, will be

drafted for the following high-risk patient groups: premature babies, pregnant women, chronically ill patients and patients suffering from immunosuppressive disorders.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “vaccination”, “risk assessment”, “standards”, “standards of care”, high-risk patients, “patients”, “Critical Illness”, “Critical Care”, “Intensive Care”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “ethics”, “immunology”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “mortality”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “toxicity”, “supply and distribution”.

- “Immunocompromised Host”, “Immune System Diseases”, “Immunosuppression”, “Chronic Disease”
- “Pregnant Women”
- “Infant, Newborn”, “Infant, Low Birth Weight”, “Infant, Small for Gestational Age”, “Infant, Very Low Birth Weight”, “Infant, Postmature”, “Infant, Premature”, “Pregnancy, High-Risk”, “Multiple Birth Offspring”, “Intensive Care, Neonatal”.
- “Health Personnel”

Planning

2012	2013				2014			
immunosuppressive disorders (8561) – Publié								
pregnant women (8754)								
Premature babies (8803) – Publié								
Health Personnel (8804)								

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SHC 8839 – Project concerning the “anti-vaccine” movements

This project aims to address the 10 most common misconceptions about vaccination. Rather than rebuking the anti-vaccine movements, the SHC wishes to provide the public with an answer to their questions concerning vaccination. Well-informed patients and parents will take well informed decisions about their vaccination status.

Examining the phenomenon of “anti-vaccine” pressure groups requires expertise in sociology, psychology, communication, etc.

The National Bioethics Committee is preparing an advisory report on mandatory vaccination. The SHC report will provide scientific background to this ethical report.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “vaccination”, “Mass Vaccination”, “vaccines”, anti-“vaccines”, “Public health”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “Patient Rights”, “Informed Consent”, “Informed Consent By Minors”, “Therapeutic Misconception”, “Treatment Refusal”, “Moral Obligations”, “Social

Responsibility”, “Ethics, Institutional”, “ethics”, “Bioethics”, “Conflict of Interest”, “Drug Industry”, “economics”, “Lobbying”, “education”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “statistics and numerical data”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “supply and distribution”, “risk assessment”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 8883 – Inquiry concerning the vaccination against Rotavirus (update 8203)

The SHC has been requested by the working group ‘Rotavirus’ of the interministerial conference of health ministers to integrate the vaccination against Rotavirus in the vaccination schedule.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “vaccination”, “Mass Vaccination”, “risk assessment”, “Rotavirus”, “Rotavirus Infections”, “Rotavirus Vaccines”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “Drug Industry”, “ethics”, “immunology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “supply and distribution”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC “vaccination programmes”: Annual revision of the vaccination programmes

The standing 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. It does this in close collaboration with the community and region officials.

The group is also tasked with approving the recommendations made about travel medicine on a yearly basis.

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 revised on a regular basis.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “vaccination”, “Mass Vaccination”, “Travel Medicine”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “risk assessment”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “ethics”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “economics”, “immunology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “trends”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “Drug Industry”, “supply and distribution”, “education”, “organization and administration”.

Planning*

2012				2013				2014			
8805	Vaccination guide (review of advisory report nr. 8586)										
8806	Vaccination sheet : poliomyelitis - children										
8807	Vaccination sheet : diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough - children										
8808	Vaccination sheet : haemophilic influenza type b - children										
8809	Vaccination sheet : hepatitis B - children										
8810	Vaccination sheet : meningococcus C - children										
8811	Vaccination sheet : measles, mumps and rubella - children										

8812	Vaccination sheet : rotavirus - children
8813	Vaccination sheet : pneumococcus - children
8814	Vaccination sheet : diphtheria – adults
8815	Vaccination sheet : hepatitis A - adults
8816	Vaccination sheet : hepatitis B –adults
8817	Vaccination sheet : pneumococcus - adults
8818	Vaccination sheet : rabies – adults
8819	Vaccination sheet : tetanus – adults
8820 - 9910	Vaccination sheet : whooping cough - adults
8821	Vaccination sheet : TBC
8822	Vaccination sheet : influenza
9111	Vaccination sheet : Catch up schedule
9117	Vaccination sheet : HPV
9141	Vaccination sheet : immunisation schedule for children

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SHC “Influenza”

In close co-operation with the Interministerial Influenza Coordination Committee (http://www.influenza.be/fr/home_fr.asp), which is tasked with managing crisis situations, the SHC will issue advisory reports on seasonal influenza, avian influenza (A/H5N1), A/H1N1 influenza and pandemic influenza.

In particular, the group issues an advisory report each year on the recommendations concerning the vaccination against seasonal influenza.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “vaccination”, “Mass Vaccination”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “risk assessment”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “ethics”, “Influenza, Human”, “Influenza Vaccines”, “Influenza in Birds”, “Influenza A Virus, H1N1 Subtype”, “Influenza A Virus, H5N1 Subtype”, “Influenza B virus”, “Influenza A virus”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “economics”, “immunology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “trends”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “Drug Industry”, “supply and distribution”, “education”, “organization and administration”.

Planning : Permanent activity

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SHC “new vaccines”

Whenever new vaccines are marketed, the SHC issues an advisory report on the need for and potential impact of these vaccines as well as the vaccination strategies that will benefit public health the most. These dossiers are prepared by a sub-working group and are then submitted to the standing working group as a whole for discussion. The SHC also comments on the advice issued by the Belgian “health authorities” for each centrally registered vaccine (cf. the scientific package insert of the vaccines).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: New “vaccines”, “Drug Industry”, “vaccination”, “Mass Vaccination”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “risk assessment”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “ethics”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “economics”, “immunology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “trends”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “supply and distribution”, “education”, “organization and administration”.

Planning : Permanent activity

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Meningococcal disease, which is caused by *Neisseria meningitidis*, is a severe disease that may lead to significant morbidity, a high rate of sequelae and deaths in 5-10% of cases. But the disease is rare and has shown a declining trend in Belgium since 2001 (incidence 3.7/100.000 in 2001 and 1.1/100.000 in 2012), as in most EU countries. Serogroup B is currently the predominant serogroup in Belgium (71% cases in 2012) with an incidence of around 0.8/100,000 (2012). Serogroup B disease is less severe than serogroup C disease. It mostly affects children <5 years of age (close to 50% cases) and its incidence peaks in those aged <1. For many years, a number of obstacles have undermined efforts to produce vaccines against serogroup B diseases. A first vaccine against serogroup B, Bexsero®, has received a marketing authorization in the EU for 2013. The SHC will publish an advisory report on Bexsero® by early 2014.

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Meningococcal B” ,New “vaccines”, “vaccination”, “standards”, “risk assessment”, “Belgium”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “complications”, “contraindications”, “immunology”, “statistics and numerical data”, “therapeutic use”, “trends”, “utilization”, “toxicity”, “supply and distribution”

“Planned projects”: new planned projects

- two new demands for evaluation : 9133 Hexavalent (3 doses) and Hexyon.

7B. infection control during care

Chair : Prof. Patrick DE MOL

Scientific staff: M. Jean-Jacques DUBOIS

In the area of infection control during care (formerly known as “Hygiene”), the SHC experts focus on infectious diseases that are liable to occur both in healthcare in general as well as in healthcare establishments in particular. The area “Infection Control during care” operates in close co-operation with the Belgian Infection Control Society (BICS - <http://www.belgianinfectioncontrolsociety.be/>). As this document is being drawn up, no definite agreement has yet been reached regarding projects in the area of “infection control during care”.

The activities of the SHC experts in the area of “infection control during care” are devoted to preventing infections that are liable to occur in healthcare in general and in the specific environment of healthcare facilities in particular. The 1946 "Loi sanitaire – Gezondheidswet“ (Health Act) had already invested the SHC with the specific role of scientific advisory body on this matter. This role was reinforced when the Royal Decree of 26 April 2007 was published in the Belgian Official Gazette. Indeed, the hospital hygiene team of each facility is required to "implement the guidelines and recommendations drawn up by official bodies such as the Superior Health Council"« mettre en œuvre les directives et recommandations rédigées par des organismes officiels tels que le Conseil supérieur de la Santé » (sic). This has had the highly positive direct effect of drawing those active in the field of hospital hygiene to the SHC working groups. In other words, the experts involved in the different types of platforms (federal, regional and provincial) can make their own contribution to the prevention and control of such infections.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports – projects

SHC 8383 – Project concerning the revision of the booklet on Transmissible Spongiform Encephalopathies (No. 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.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Infection Control”, “risk assessment”, “decontamination”, “surgical equipment”, “surgical instruments”, “sterilization”, “prions”, “Prion Diseases”,

“Creutzfeldt-Jakob Syndrome”, “Encephalopathy, Bovine Spongiform”, “blood”, “cerebrospinal fluid”, “complications”, “epidemiology”, “prevention and control”, “surgery”, “transmission”.

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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SHC 8693 – Project concerning the revision of SHC advisory report No. 7721 on Group B streptococci (GBS)

In 2003, the SHC published guidelines concerning the prevention of and fight against perinatal group B streptococcal infection (GBS). This project therefore aims at revising the 2003 recommendations in the light of new scientific data that have been published since, as well as the full report of the CDC published in September 2011 <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/content/128/3/611.full.html>.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Infection Control” during care, “Quality of Health Care”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “Hygiene”, “Health Care Sector”, “risk assessment”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “streptococcal beta antigen”, GBS, “Streptococcus”, perinatal group B streptococcal disease, “Bacterial Infections and Mycoses”, “Infection”, “Sepsis”, “Infant, Newborn”, “pregnant women”, “Antibiotic Prophylaxis”, “complications”, “economics”, “epidemiology”, “prevention and control”, “Therapeutics”, “therapy”, “transmission”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “statistics and numerical data”.

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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SHC 8836 - Inquiry concerning the issue of multiresistant bacteria (MRB) included CPE

The SHC has already issued several advisory reports on the issue of Methicillin-Resistant Staphylococcus Aureus (MRSA). This project aims at extending this examination to other multi-drug resistant organisms (MDRO). The think-tank “infection control during care” has therefore decided to issue specific, national recommendations on the prevention of and fight against these organisms.

The SHC has received a specific urgent inquiry (SHC 8791) from the Minister concerning the preventive measures that need to be implemented in the fight against

resistant and carbapenemase-producing bacterial strains. This inquiry will be given priority but will also be included in the more general advisory report.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Infection Control” during care, “Quality of Health Care”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “Hygiene”, “Health Care Sector”, “risk assessment”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Drug Resistance”, “Drug Resistance, Microbial”, “Drug Resistance, Bacterial”, “Drug Resistance, Multiple”, “Drug Resistance, Multiple, Bacterial”, multidrug resistant organism, MDRO, “Genes, MDR”, “Cross Infection”, “Anti-Bacterial Agents”, “Antibiotic Prophylaxis”, “Microbial Sensitivity Tests”, “complications”, “economics”, “epidemiology”, “prevention and control”, “Therapeutics”, “therapy”, “pharmacology”, “therapeutic use”, “Drug Therapy, Combination”, “transmission”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “statistics and numerical data”), prevention.

- “beta-Lactamases”, “carbapenemase”, carbapenem resistance, “enterobacteriaceae”, “Enterobacteriaceae Infections”, “Gram-Negative Bacterial Infections”, “Klebsiella pneumoniae”, “Escherichia coli”,

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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SHC 9132 – request for advice from the French Community – Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FC- FWB) on the mumps epidemic

Letter from Ms. F Laanan (FC-FWB) urging Ms. L. Onkelinx to seek the advice of the SHC on the mumps outbreak in the French Community.

Following the mumps outbreak in the FC-FWB early this year, the FC-FWB Minister would like Ms. Onkelinx to request an advisory report from the SHC in order to determine the severity of the situation and the possible consequences and implications in terms of preventive public health measures.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Mumps virus”, “Infection Control”, “Prophylaxis”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “epidemiology”, “prevention and control”, “transmission”, “Belgium”,

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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SHC 9145 – request for advice from the French Community – Federation Wallonia-Brussels (FC- FWB) on invasive meningococcal infections

Letter from Ms. F Laanan (FC-FWB) urging Ms. L. Onkelinx to seek the advice of the SHC on the preventive medicine measures pertaining to invasive meningococcal infections.

Invasive meningococcal infections are considered health emergencies, yet the collective measures that need to be taken for preventive purposes differ from one Community to another. The FC-FWB Minister would like Ms. Onkelinx to request an advisory report from the SHC on the recommended measures: appropriate prophylactic actions, context, nature of the indications, justification for antibiotic prophylaxis, reference molecule.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Meningococcal Infection”, Prophylaxis, “Antibiotic Prophylaxis”, ” Post-Exposure Prophylaxis”, “Infection Control”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “epidemiology”, “prevention and control”, “transmission”, “Belgium”

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

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SHC 8729 - Inquiry into alternative measures for managing the risk of Legionella

Mr. Jo VAN DEURZEN, the Flemish Minister for Welfare, Public Health and Family has submitted an inquiry concerning advisory reports issued by the Superior Health Council regarding alternative measures for managing the risk of Legionella.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Infection Control” during care, “Quality of Health Care”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “Hygiene”, “risk assessment”, “Belgium”, “legislation, “jurisprudence”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “Legionella”, “Legionellosis”, “Legionnaires' Disease”, “water”, “water pollutants”, “water microbiology”, “water purification”, “water supply”, “water softening”, “occupational exposure”, “supply and distribution”, “public health”, “environment and public health”, “prevention and control”, “economics”, “instrumentation”, “methods”, “standards”, “statistics and numerical data”, “epidemiology”.

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on infection control during care

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is difficult to foresee what requests will be submitted in the area of “infection control during care” in 2014.

Still, a permanent think-tank has been set up to follow up on this issue. In the light of current events and the demand from the healthcare sector, this group of experts has decided to give priority to the following topics in 2014: the issue of multiresistant bacteria (MDRO) and the treatment and management of highly contagious diseases.

As this document is being drawn up, no definite agreement has yet been reached regarding projects in the area of “Infection control during care”.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Public Health”, “Epidemiology”, “Infection Control” during care, “Quality of Health Care”, “Quality Indicators, Health Care”, “Hygiene”, “Health Care Sector”, “risk assessment”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “Disease Transmission, Infectious”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Reference Standards”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “education”, “manpower”, “methods”, “statistics and numerical data”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “organization and administration”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, think-tank.

Planning: permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: new planned projects

8889: *Prevention of urinary infections during care* »

Studies have pointed out the frequency of urinary infections acquired during care. Still, urinary infections can be easily prevented. It seems that less attention is paid to this matter for the moment. Recent literature data provide us information on what practices allow efficient implementation of a prevention programme for urinary infections resulting from probes. These measures are currently being studied in a subgroup of the *Plateforme d'Hygiène Hospitalière de Bruxelles-Brabant Wallon*. This work may result in updating the 2001 recommendations (prevention of urinary infections acquired during care).

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Public Health”, “Epidemiology”, “Infection Control” during care, urinary infections, prevention

Planning

Indéterminé

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Chapter 8

COSMETOLOGY AND COSMETIC DEVICES, INCLUDING COSMETIC SURGERY

Chair : Prof. Hidle BEELE

Scientific staff: Ms. Anne-Madeleine PIRONNET

This new field of activity looks into the public health implications of cosmetic products, devices and techniques and of cosmetic surgery, as well as the context in which they are applied or used: rooms, staff qualification and training, user information, good practice ensuring quality and safety, etc.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports – projects

SHC 8866 – Aluminium components in deodorants and antiperspirant cosmetic products

This inquiry concerns a risk assessment regarding the use of aluminium components in cosmetic products, especially in deodorants and antiperspirants.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “risk assessment”, "Aluminum", "Aluminum Oxide", "Aluminum Hydroxide", "Aluminum Compounds", "Aluminum Silicates"

Planning

2012				2013				2014			

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SHC 9142 – report advice on some slimming equipment

This advisory report will express an opinion on the safety and efficacy of slimming equipment that uses ultrasounds.

“MeSH terms” or key words: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “risk assessment”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “”, “education”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “ethics”.

2013				2014				2015		

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SHC 8893 - Project regarding ink for tattooing

The increasing popularity of tattoos and permanent make-up (PMU) has meant that the number of complications too is on the rise, some of which may require medical care. The potential short-term health problems are generally caused by infections and are often related to the manner in which the procedure was carried out. In addition, there are complications which tend to appear in the long term and may not produce any effects until weeks, months or years later. They may result from allergic reactions or toxic effects induced by the inks. Although several toxic chemical components such as heavy metals have already been banned from the inks, other components are still being used which have not been proven to be safe. Especially the aromatic dyes that have been increasingly used in recent years may contain potentially carcinogenic components. Many of the commercially available products are of dubious origin or composition.

Approximately 10-20 % of tattooees have their tattoo removed by laser treatment after a few years. There is limited information available in the literature about the chemical breakdown of the dyes into components with potentially carcinogenic properties.

The aim of the project is first to examine the present legal situation (at the national, European and international level), to collect and analyse reported side-effects (literature study - medical database) as well as to determine what are the pharmacological and toxicological properties of the inks used.

A second aim is to use this information to draw up a negative list of products that should be avoided. In a later phase, an attempt can be made to draw up a positive list of safe products. An advisory report is to be issued on sterility, quality control, packaging (e.g. single doses) and *labelling* of the inks.

On the one hand, the aim is to reduce the risk of complications by issuing advice (mainly intended for tattooists and beauticians) and, on the other, to inform the general public. The main target group are young people (teenagers, young adults), who should be made aware of the danger through information campaigns, folders, etc.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “risk assessment”, “Tattooing/adverse effects”, “Tattooing/complications”, “Tattooing/legislation and

jurisprudence", "Tattooing/methods", "Tattooing/toxicity", "Tattooing/trends", "ink", "Chinese ink".

Planning

2013				2014				2015		

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SHC 8892 - Project regarding psychological factors and aesthetic practice (problem of addiction)

The term “cosmetics” refers to all processes and treatments used for superficial beautification purposes. “Cosmetic work” is the term used to denote treatment intended to change the presentation of a body part without proceeding to any fundamental alteration at the level of the dermis or the organism. Advertisement and women magazines have considerably increased the trade in and popularity of cosmetics. In wealthy countries, some cosmetics are used not only by young girls and sometimes young boys at an ever earlier age, but also by elderly people.

Nowadays, many people wish to change their appearance in one way or another in order to meet the current standards of beauty: a Hollywood smile and the figure of a top model, etc. This often leads to repeat procedures and may turn into an obsession.

It appears that this may result in some kind of addiction.

Moreover, 1 to 2 % of the population are believed to suffer from BDD (body dysmorphic disorder; DSM-IV) or imaginary ugliness. 3 to 15 % of these individuals are thought to consult plastic surgeons.

The standing working group “cosmetology” would like to examine the psychological aspects of cosmetic or aesthetic treatment. They wish to study the potential negative effects of such treatment, such as addiction to all kinds of treatment, by looking at the consequences of repeat procedures and the long-term risks.

Moreover, such treatments do have a number of positive aspects, which the working group will take into account, such as, e.g. enhanced wellness and self-esteem after chemotherapy.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “risk assessment”, “public health”, “mental health”, “behavior, addictive”, “health”, “health promotion”

Planning

2013				2014				2015		

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SHC 9139 - Project regarding the use of Melanotan II (Barbie drug): advantages and side effects (problem of addiction)

Melanotan II is a synthetic peptide and hormone analogue. It is currently undergoing clinical trials but is subject to extensive trafficking. The advisory report aims at defining the different molecules involved, determining whether or not the product is safe, whether or not there are any side effects, such as depression, addiction, etc. and at advising means of informing the general public.

Planning

2014				2015				2016		

“MeSH terms” or key words: “Cosmetics”, “risk assessment”, “therapy”, “therapeutics”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “education”, “prevention and control”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “organization and administration”, “trends”.

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SHC 9140 - Project regarding the use of coloured lenses: a problem of use and not of product

Besides contact lenses that have a medical purpose (viz. correct vision or treat migraines), there are also non-corrective cosmetic contact lenses that are designed solely to change the appearance of the eye. They are mainly used by women and teenagers.

These lenses are increasingly commercially available. Yet their use may result in complications ranging from mild discomfort to infections, keratitis and allergic conjunctivitis, which can sometimes damage vision and even result in its loss.

The vast majority of the problems are caused by those wearing them making improper use of the lenses and failing to comply with the instructions. It is therefore of paramount importance to inform the general public of the risks incurred and to

ensure that careful heed is paid to the recommendations and advice of the health professionals who prescribe lenses for medical purposes.

It is therefore necessary to recommend that the instructions in the package insert be followed, even for coloured lenses that are purchased in supermarkets.

Planning

2014				2015				2016		

“MeSH terms” or key words: “Cosmetics”, “ “risk assessment”, “Infection Control”, “Hygiene”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “Disease Transmission, Infectious”, “Practice Guidelines”, sanitary requirements, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “legislation”, “education”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “statistics and numerical data”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “trends”.

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SHC 9150- Project regarding the use of glue for artificial eyelashes

Eyelash extension is a practice that is becoming increasingly common in cosmetics. In some cases, the glue that is used causes rashes, dermatitis, eczema, irritation (blepharitis or keratoconjunctivitis) induced by the latex or formaldehyde it contains. The components of the glue are therefore liable to cause allergic reactions or irritations.

Recommendations should be made to warn ophthalmologists and dermatologists about this increasingly widespread use and to inform the general public of the risks incurred.

Planning

2014				2015				2016		

“MeSH terms” or key words: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “risk assessment”, “Infection Control”, “Hygiene”, “skin diseases”, “skin diseases, infectious”, “dermatomycoses”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “Disease Transmission, Infectious”, “Practice Guidelines”, sanitary requirements, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “education”, “prevention and control”, “trends”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”.

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on cosmetics, cosmetic techniques and devices, reconstructive surgical procedures and plastic surgery

As this work programme is being drawn up, it is difficult to predict what requests will be submitted to the SHC in 2013 in the field of cosmetology and cosmetic devices, including cosmetic surgery. Still, a permanent think-tank has been set up to follow up on this issue.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “Cosmetics”, “Cosmetic Techniques”, “Reconstructive Surgical Procedures”, “Surgery, Plastic”, “Body Modification, Non-Therapeutic”, “Consumer Product Safety”, “Device Approval”, “Safety-Based Medical Device Withdrawals”, “risk assessment”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Reference Standards”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “education”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “methods”, “statistics and numerical data”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “organization and administration”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “administration and dosage”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “poisoning”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “toxicity”, “psychology”, think-tank.

Planning: permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: new planned projects

Project: revision of the advisory report on sunbeds

A draft advisory report should be drawn up in order to revise the advisory report on sunbeds that was issued in 2000. Its scope should be extended so as to take into account all kinds of UV exposure in beauty salons.

PUBLIC HEALTH GENOMICS (PHG)

Chair : Prof. Herman VAN OYEN

Scientific staff : Ms. Anouck WITTERS & M. Roland HÜBNER

On 8 February 2010, the Belgian National Task Force (NTF) "Génomique et Santé Publique" (Public Health Genomics) organised a symposium on "How to correctly introduce genome-based knowledge in the Belgian health care services?". This working group was set up within the framework of the European project "PHGEN" (<http://www.phgen.nrw.de/typo3/index.php>), which looks at the prerequisites for a proper implementation of the achievements of public health genomics in the healthcare system.

This field of activity of the Superior Health Council focuses on the transposition of human genome research into clinical practice by drawing up advisory reports on this issue. These advisory reports can form the basis on which to formulate criteria, including criteria that pertain to the carrying out of genetic tests within the context of certain kinds of treatment. These criteria could allow for a framework to be developed that would consist of basic guidelines accompanied with a detailed explanatory note. These basic guidelines could then be transposed into legislation.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

SHC 8912 - Project regarding the implementation of non-invasive prenatal screening in Belgium. Co-operation of the HRS with the KCE and the Bioethics Committee

The implementation of non-invasive prenatal screening may need to abide by a set of criteria for appropriate use, starting with the request for carrying out the test, the test itself and attendant test quality considerations, the treatment and the follow-up.

At the request of the Minister of Health, the SHC, the KCE and the ACA (Belgian Advisory Committee on Bioethics) will provide a joint advisory report on non-invasive prenatal testing for chromosomal and genetic abnormalities. The ACA is requested to issue an advisory report on the ethical issues raised by such tests.

The SHC and the KCE are requested to issue an advisory report on the indication and the positioning of these tests and to formulate recommendations regarding the health economics of their reimbursement and organisation, in the event of their turning out to be a useful tool for prenatal screening.

The SHC will assess the following sides of this issue: the quality, specificity and sensitivity of the tests that are commercially available, identifying the target audience to which NIPT/NIPD will be offered. In addition, NIPT/NIPD will be considered in

the context of actual practice in order to provide an answer to a number of specific questions: what will be the place of NIPT/NIPD in current practice, how will pre-and post-test counselling be set up in actual practice? Moreover, the SHC will examine a few pragmatic considerations: which laboratories have any experience in NIPT/NIPD and/or will gain such experience, i.e. what is the capacity for providing NIPT/NIPD in Belgium, within what timeframe may there be sufficient capacity (~ target : everyone vs. high-risk patients)?

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “prenatal diagnosis”, “non-invasive prenatal diagnosis”, “non-invasive prenatal testing”, “trisomy 21”, “Down syndrome”, “aneuploidies”, “public health”, “genomics”, “Individualized Medicine”, “genetics”, “pharmacogenetics”, “genetic testing”, “risk assessment”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Reference Standards”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “education”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “methods”, “statistics and numerical data”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “organization and administration”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”.

Planning

2013				2014				2015			

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“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

SHC permanent think-tank on public health genomics

As this work programme comes into being, it is difficult to predict what requests we may expect in 2014 in the field of PHG. Nevertheless, a permanent think-tank has been set up to follow up on this issue and to provide transversal support to the other groups of the SHC that could require expertise in this field for their own area.

“MeSH terms” or keywords: “public health”, “genomics”, “Individualized Medicine”, “genetics”, “pharmacogenetics”, “genetic testing”, “risk assessment”, “Total Quality Management”, “Quality Control”, “Quality Improvement”, “standards”, “standards of care”, “Reference Standards”, “Guidelines”, “Practice Guidelines”, “European Union”, “Belgium”, “legislation and jurisprudence”, “legislation”, “jurisprudence”, “education”, “economics”, “prevention and control”, “methods”, “statistics and numerical data”, “ethics”, “bioethics”, “organization and administration”, “supply and distribution”, “trends”, “adverse effects”, “contraindications”, “therapeutic use”, “therapy”, “psychology”, think-tank.

Planning: permanent think-tank

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“Planned projects”: new planned projects

SHC xxxx - Project regarding the implementation of pharmacogenetics in Belgium

Guidelines are currently being developed within the European project PHgen II. The implementation of pharmacogenetic applications may need to abide by a set of criteria for appropriate use, starting with the request for carrying out the test, the test itself and attendant test quality considerations, the treatment and the follow-up.

“MeSH terms” or keywords:

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

SHC xxxx - Project regarding the implementation of chronic disease screening in Belgium

Some individuals carry variations of genes which may point to an inherited risk of some types of chronic disease. Genomic testing looks for these variations, which in turn can help healthcare providers understand a person’s risk of developing these chronic diseases. The implementation of chronic disease screening may need to abide by a set of criteria for appropriate use, starting with the request for carrying out the test, the test itself and attendant test quality considerations, the treatment and the follow-up.

“MeSH terms” or keywords:

Planning

2014				2015				2016			

Chapter 10

MISCELLANEA AND MULTIDISCIPLINARY GROUPS

Scientific staff : M. Eric JADOUL

Subsumed under the label “Miscellanea and multidisciplinary groups” are such topics as cannot be included in one of the previous fields, but for which the SHC is, however, required to issue advisory reports. They often concern a combination of several of our working areas or a very specific request.

“Ongoing activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports - projects

NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL CO-OPERATION

This chapter reviews the ongoing initiatives and projects aimed at improving the coordination and integration of the SHC advisory reports at the national and international level.

11A. At the national level

For many years now, the SHC has, from time to time, cooperated with the other Belgian scientific advisory bodies. At the moment, this co-operation is mainly linked to specific advisory reports. Nevertheless, some experts from the other institutions also take part in the SHC think-tanks on certain general fields of activity. They do so in a personal capacity and as specialists in the field under consideration. Moreover, given the Belgian context, many of the appointed experts of the SHC and members of the Board take part in the activities of other scientific groups of Belgian institutions. This in turn means that these activities are, to some extent at least, coordinated in this country. More detailed information on this subject can be found in the preceding chapters.

Still, the report from the Court of Auditors from January 2010 on the “scientific support to federal health policy” gives a mixed assessment of this coordination among the main Belgian parties involved.

The full report (82 p.), the summary (2 p.) and the press release can be found on the Court of Audit’s website (www.rekenhof.be).

This year we are pleased to have taken a very active part in the further coordination of our advisory programmes with those of various Belgian institutions whose scope of activities include the issuing of advisory reports and the performing of health management or assessment, such as the Federal Public Service Health, Food Chain Safety and Environment (FPS HFCSE), the Belgian Health Care Knowledge Centre (KCE), the Scientific Institute of Public Health (IPH) and the National Institute of Health and Disability Insurance (NIHDI).

The integrated HRS (Health Research System) tool has been up and running for a year now and has yielded its first results. The HRS-POP database is a high-performance database that is continuously updated and contributes to the exchange of information online between these largely complementary institutions.

Whilst 2012 was a busy year in terms of the technical implementation of this project, 2013 was devoted to strengthening relations between the partners and extending the project to other institutions such as the CODA-CERVA (Veterinary and Agrochemical Research Centre) and the FAMHP (Federal Agency for Medicines and Health Products).

The information in the database and the ties created during the implementation of the project have resulted in cooperation with e.g. the KCE on autism, the IPH and the Directorate-General for Primary Health Care and Crisis Management on the fight against MDRO (Multi Drug Resistant Organisms), with the KCE-FPS-IPH on non-invasive prenatal tests, with the IPH and the FPS-DG4 on the Belgian regulations pertaining to food, etc.

This year was also the year in which contacts were made with the IT departments that manage the database, the VDIC (Vesalius Documentation and Information Centre) library and the communication departments of the FPS in view of extending the database to a common system for publishing finalised and validated advisory reports. We would like to thank Ms Beatrice Toussaint and the other active members of the network for the energy they have devoted to this very useful development of the project.

Finally, as was the case last year, the validation phase of the work programme was carried out in a fully transparent manner with the 5 HRS partners and the representatives of the federated entities who were invited to attend the special plenary session of the Board on 4 December 2013 ([Website WP 2014](#)).

The State reform makes provision for a further transfer of a number of competences to the Communities and Regions. This includes some public health matters pertaining to the activities of the Council. In order to avoid the further scattering of the scientific advisory landscape and to ensure at the same time that the federated entities continue to receive the necessary scientific support for their policy decisions, the Council has continued these initiatives, e.g. by inviting representatives of the federated entities to all the meetings of its Board. These representatives regularly attend these meetings and ties are gradually being created.

Following suit to the German-speaking Community, the SHC has presented its activities and methodology to the Cabinet of the Walloon Region this year. Regular contacts about vaccination have already taken place with the Flemish Region and a more formal meeting with the Flemish authorities took place on 6 December 2013 to mark the 65th anniversary of the Royal Academy of Medicine (Dutch-speaking section). In 2014, we will continue our contacts with the Brussels authorities, the French Community and other important political figures, both in strategic cells as well as the public services that are related to them.

These efforts are beginning to bear fruit, as is apparent from e.g. the fact that official inquiries have been sent on issues such as the mumps, invasive meningococcal infections or the possible adaptation of the vaccination schedule. An advisory report on the screening for colorectal cancer has also been formulated in the context of cooperation with the federated entities.

The SHC has also proactively drawn the attention of several ministers in charge to its advisory reports on the issues of chlorine, wind turbines and cardiac screening in adolescents and young adults. Senate hearings were also held regarding the advisory reports on palm oil and trans fatty acids, as there is a political will to adapt the Belgian legislation on these issues following the work of the SHC.

More recently and in a more comprehensive fashion, the SCH has taken part in the discussions related to the memorandum of understanding on the fight against MDRO and the new "Lex Alimentarius" Bill. These discussions are not always easy but the Council as well as its administrative and scientific staff will continue to do everything in their power to give voice to the scientific experts in the field.

11B. At the international level

Certain groups and/or experts of the SHC are part of existing European and international networks, such as:

- the NHFS working group, which is part of the EFSA network (European Food Safety Authority - <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/>).

* One of its members also represents the group within the ESCO (European Scientific Cooperation - <http://www.efsa.europa.eu/en/esco/escofolicacid.htm>), a working group that analyses the risks and benefits of folic acid enriched foods.

* One of its members has also joined the working group that focusses on the issue of exposure to BPA. The Belgian SHC report will be presented to the EFSA and will provide a basis for European activities in this field.

* There will also be cooperation between the ANSES (experts on water) and the NHFS working group of the SHC. The aim will be to assess the criteria that need to be met in order to be authorised to bear the relevant claims in both countries.

* The NHFS working group has shown interest in taking part in a pilot project of the EFSA on nutriviigilance; one of its members will join the working group that is to be set up.

- The PHG group, which works in close co-operation with the Belgian task force of the European PHGen network (<http://www.phgen.eu/typo3/index.php>).

- In October 2011, the six year- EuSANH-ISA project (Improving science advice for health) officially came to an end in Bucharest and the EuSANH network was launched (<http://www.eusanh.eu/>). In this context, the SHC will increasingly take part in co-operation agreements with 17 new Scientific Advisory bodies (SABs) from the European Union. To keep informed of these activities, please subscribe to the [EuSANH newsletter](#).

Having demonstrated its usefulness during a 3-year pilot project phase supported by the EU, the EuSANH network entered its final phase in late 2011. This year has been a year of transition as regards the country holding the presidency of the network. Indeed, the Netherlands have passed on the reins to Spain, more precisely to its Instituto de Salud Carlos III.

Through its new president, Mr Carlos Segovia, many European contacts were made during the year in order to determine the role of this young network among the European advisory bodies already in place. This has led to e.g. the EuSANH network becoming a member of the Stakeholders' Advisory Board of the Joint Programming Initiative on Healthy Diet (<http://www.healthydietforhealthylife.eu/>). Its role as a stakeholder is to give input to the

Strategic Research Agenda and other relevant activities, demonstrating the interest of using research results to inform health policy.

Therefore, SHC has decided to review its nutritional recommendations for Belgium this year in co-operation with the EuSANH partner institutions and the work in progress, especially that carried out within the EFSA (European Food Safety Authority).

The report of our EuSANH workshop 2012 on vaccination schedules in Malta has now been published online in Vaccine. It can be found at <http://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/pii/S0264410X13010980#>

The first author of this publication, Dr H. Theeten works for the Vaccine and Infectious Disease Institute, University of Antwerp, Belgium and is one of the experts of the vaccination group at the Superior Health Council.

Contacts continue to be made from time to time with France (ANSES: French Agency for Food, Environmental and Occupational Health & Safety; HCSP: French High Council on Public Health, etc..) in the context of ties created within the EuSANH-network. Views were exchanged on some advisory reports (autism, criteria for waters, nutritional recommendations, etc.)

“Ongoing permanent activities”: confidential and/or select advisory reports

The different 2014 work programmes of the organisations taking part in the network are currently being compared in order to explore potential avenues of co-operation for the setting up of new projects during the year.

In 2014, the SHC will focus on its international co-operation on the following subjects:

- mental health and psychosocial factors ([EuSANH](#) contacts : advisory report on Autistic Disorder);
- nutrition and health, including food safety (NHFS) and food microbiology (Belgium coordinates the drawing up of scientific advisory reports on food, there is also co-operation with the [EFSA](#), JPI ([Joint Programming Initiatives](#)) on “a healthy diet for a healthy life”);
- vaccination, infectiology and infection control during care ([EuSANH](#) and Vaccination risk assessment, mass vaccination programmes, anti-“vaccine” movements and JPI ([Joint Programming Initiatives](#)) “Antimicrobial resistance”);
- Public Health Genomics ([European PHGen network](#));

“Planned Projects”: new planned projects

To be determined after having compared the 2014 work programmes within the framework of the EuSANH project.

SCIENTIFIC CONTACT INFORMATION PER FIELD OF ACTIVITY

The distribution of the tasks per field of activity reflects the current situation, which could change in the course of the year depending on the workload and/or arrival of additional scientific staff.

1. Mental health and psychosocial factors in public health

GERARD Sylvie (SG)

Sylvie.Gerard@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 42

- projects and new requests for advice. Transversal work on ethical aspects (PHG, vaccination, NHFS, etc.)

2. Physical environmental factors (ionising radiation, non-ionising radiation)

JADOUL Eric (EJ)

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- non-ionising radiation

MERTENS Veerle (VM)

veerle.mertens@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 51

- ionising radiation

3. Chemical agents

VAN DEN BRANDE Marleen (MVDB)

marleen.vandenbrande@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 44

- projects and new requests for advice

BALTES Muriel (MB)

Muriel.Baltes@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 49

- support

4. Nutrition and health, including food safety and food microbiology

ULENS Michèle (MiU)

Michele.Ulens@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 45

- general coordination of the NHFS group (national and international), in charge of projects and new requests for advice, etc.

WIT*TERS Anouck (AW)

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- technical and routine advisory reports concerning Novel Food regulations.
- technical and routine advisory reports: food supplements, PET, waters and re-examination of dossiers.

DUBOIS Jean-Jacques (JJJ)

Jean-Jacques.Dubois@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 47

- food microbiology

5. Blood and blood products

HÜBNER Roland (RH)

Roland.Hubner@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 50

6. Cells, tissues and organs of human and animal origin

BALTES Muriel (MB)

Muriel.Baltes@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 49

7. Vaccination, infectiology and infection control during care

MERTENS Veerle (VM)

veerle.mertens@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 51

- Vaccination and infectiology

DUBOIS Jean-Jacques (JJD)

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- Infection control during care
- Infectiology
- Questions in relation with veterinary medicine.

HÜBNER Roland (RH)

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- Emerging infectious diseases

8. Cosmetology and cosmetic devices, including cosmetic surgery

PIRONNET Anne-Madeleine (AMP)

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9. Public Health Genomics (PHG)

WITTERS Anouck (AW)

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HÜBNER Roland (RH)

Roland.Hubner@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 50

- Support

10. Miscellanea and multidisciplinary groups

JADOUL Eric (EJ)

Eric.Jadoul@health.belgium.be - +32 2 525 09 44

- New requests for advice
- Support for urgent advices

11. Internal, national (HRS) and international coordination (EuSANH, EFSA, etc.)

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- General coordination of the SHC

LAURENT Roxane (RL)

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- Coordination of the SHC's administrative and financial activities

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- Quality manager

PETERS Fabrice (FP)

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- Coordination of the SHC's scientific activities



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