

IOHA President's Report, 2005 – 2006

Time flies like an arrow. A year has passed. I remember when I first took up my term of presidency, it was in Pilanesberg, South Africa, where the 6th IOHA Scientific Conference was held. Many things happened and they were progressing well. On the whole, this was a fruitful year, and indeed, I had met many friends and learnt a lot valuable lessons. The following are some interesting events for refreshment of our memory and looking forward to a forthcoming work plan.

The 6th IOHA Scientific Conference

This was a big event both to IOHA and me. The event was co-organised by IOHA with the Southern African Institute for Occupational Hygiene (SAIOH) and the Mine Ventilation Society of South Africa (MVS) from 19-23 September 2005. Thanks must go to the Conference Organising President, Mr. David Stanton and his team for the preparation and arrangement of the programmes and venue. The conference attracted more than 350 delegates from over 40 countries and fulfilled the mission of bringing attention of people to occupational hygiene in Africa and globally. The Conference incorporated the Third International Control Banding Workshop (3ICBW) and the Planning Meeting of the WHO Collaborating Centres (CC) in Occupational Health, which was held the weekend before in Johannesburg to coincide with IOHA Conference 2005. Although the conference generated an income for IOHA, the most important outcome was the experience and knowledge that we had learnt and brought home.

Collaborations with International Bodies

IOHA is a non-governmental organisation (NGO) to both World Health Organisation (WHO) and International Labour Organisation (ILO) and we have collaborated with both organizations in many international activities for a number of years. In the past year, IOHA participated with them in the promotion and development of International Toolkits, including the teleconferences of International Technical Group (ITG). IOHA submitted a position paper on Pandemic Control and gave comment on the draft proposal in the "Elimination of Asbestos Related Diseases".

In June, David Zalk and I attended the 7th meeting of the WHO CCs in Stresa, Italy. I was glad that IOHA could be involved again in the meeting of the WHO Collaborating Centres for the new work plan from 2006 to 2010. Six activity areas were identified and hundreds of projects had been initiated. IOHA is interested in several joint projects with other organisations or collaborating centres. The final Compendium of activities of the WHO Collaborating Centres in Occupational Health 2006-2010 will soon be published on the WHO website. Also, IOHA could consider taking up the role of adviser in some areas – including

activity areas 3, 4 and 5.

Apart from the International Chemical Control Toolkit (ICCT), currently we were looking forward to the possible applications of the concept (of control banding) for specific areas - such as control of silica dust in workplaces, safety at work and ergonomics, etc.

The coming 10 year work plan on the "Global plan of action for Workers' Health" from 2008 to 2017 is also an important matter. Its first meeting will be held at Geneva in early October, and IOHA looks forward to participation in the Global Steering Committee.

IOHA has a close liaison with ILO too. Although Dr. Takala has retired from ILO, we will continue our collaborative activities in the years to come with his successor. The development of Silica Control Toolkit is an important project among ILO/ WHO/ HSE (UK)/ IOHA for achieving the target of Eliminating Silicosis globally in the coming decades. IOHA would be giving comments, promoting the toolkit and also like to help in evaluation of its usefulness in field application. Also, IOHA strongly supports and recommends that the title "Occupational Hygienist/ Industrial Hygienist" should be added to the listing of the International Standard Classification of Occupation (ISCO 2008). Meanwhile, ILO is seeking for consultation with its country members.

On the other hand, we have the opportunity of continuing the partnership with Dr. Takala in the European Agency (EU), because he would be taking up the job in the [European Agency for Safety and Health at Work](#) soon. The linked website <http://eu.ioha.net> was a success between IOHA and the European Agency, that we could share information. There will be a review of the work within the European Agency by 2007. We are however looking forward to extending further collaboration with EU when the new work plan starts in 2008.

Contacts with other organizations

In the promotion of occupational health for the protection of the working population, a multi-disciplinary team approach is very important. IOHA seeks to work together with other health related professional organisations to share our knowledge - particularly when occupational hygiene is one of the key solutions to the problem. Examples of our partners are the International Commission on Occupational Health (ICOH), the International Ergonomics Association (IEA) and the European Committee for Standardisation (Comité European de Normalisation, CEN)

ICOH

During the year, we had joint programmes in IOHA (2005) and ICOH (2006) conferences. Also, we had been discussing work plans on coming collaboration activities during the 7th

WHO CC in OH Meeting in Stresa for possible collaboration areas. The importance of primary prevention and controls would be emphasised for the reduction of occupational risks. The goal is working toward the elimination of the job related illnesses and injuries for the protection of international work force.

IEA

IOHA and IEA had a joint agency meeting in Maastricht, the Netherlands in July 2006. Several agreements were noted in the minutes that IOHA would provide a template of "Risk Management Toolkit" to IEA to develop ergonomics examples and IEA could make use of the opportunity for the promotion of the product in the IOHA 2008 Conference.

CEN

IOHA maintains a good relationship with CEN. Members were pleased to receive the technical information on the draft standards in connection with occupational hygiene as they provide useful reference material, in particular those papers relating to the occupational hygiene matters.

Communication and information exchange within IOHA

The website and Newsletter

It is very important to link with all member organisations through effective communications. The website of IOHA was therefore the most important for networking. The committee is looking forward to further enhancement of the effectiveness of the system for dissemination of professional knowledge and exchange of ideas and information. The IOHA Newsletter is great and informative and Berenice Goelzer, as the Editor, has most of the effort in having it published. The Editorial plans to have three regular issues each year – in 2006, we had the Newsletters published in January and June already, and expect another in this October.

Conferences

These form the platform for people interested in occupational hygiene to meet together to share and exchange opinions and knowledge for the advancement of the occupational hygiene profession. We have already announced plans for the 2008 Conference in Taipei. The venues for the upcoming 2010 and 2012 Conferences will be announced next year.

Promoting occupational hygiene

Co-operation Committee and membership committee

At present, IOHA has 25 member organisations. IOHA is working to its goals in the promotion of occupational hygiene, and maintaining contact with interested groups or societies in occupational hygiene around the world, supporting their activities for the improvement of

working environment and protection of the workforce. Should they require assistance in organising occupational hygiene activities, IOHA could be the adviser. They are also welcome to send observers to our meeting before formally joining us. We were happy to meet a Korean contact at the Leiden Board Meeting who informs us that they are keen and very interested in IOHA activities.

National accreditation recognition

In the year 2006, three national schemes had been recommended and recognised, namely the Australian, the Dutch and the South African. Congratulation!

Incorporation

The IOHA Board has agreed the new corporate structure and is going to implement this in the coming months after it goes through the formality with the Company House in early October to be registered. With the great assistance of our Secretariat in the UK, we believe it will enhance the efficiency of the work of IOHA. Indeed, it is a big step forward. Once we have become incorporated, IOHA will be able to apply for registered charity status.

Concluding remarks

I enjoyed the year being the president of the Association very much and it was most rewarding. I was lucky to have had this golden opportunity to work with many colleagues and find the programmes and projects moving ahead. Although some of them are going to leave or have left the Board in this September Meeting at Leiden, I must thank them for their participation in IOHA activities and I sincerely hope they would be continuously supporting the progress of the occupational hygiene profession and IOHA in the protection of workforce internationally. To mention some, they are Ton Spee, David Zalk, Ugis Bickis, Pentti Kalliokoski and Nick Matsas; in particular, Ton and David were very active and hard working for the International Toolkit. In the same week after the Leiden Meeting, they held a workshop together with ILO on application of the toolkit concept in safety at the Third International Conference of Working on Safety at the Eemhof, the Netherlands. Of course, I must also thank those still working very hard in the Board, in particular, Rob Ferrie, and Chih-Chieh Chen, Tom Grumbles and Noel Tresider, as well as Pamela Blythe and her supporting staff in the IOHA Secretariat for their valuable effort. Rob is now taking up the most challenging job - I sincerely wish him all the best and success as the President of IOHA in the next 18 months.

TW TSIN,
Hong Kong, 2nd October 2006