

WHA58.29 Enhancement of laboratory biosafety

The Fifty-eighth World Health Assembly,

Considering that release of microbiological agents and toxins may have global ramifications;

Acknowledging that the containment of microbiological agents and toxins in laboratories is critical to preventing outbreaks of emerging and re-emerging diseases such as severe acute respiratory syndrome (SARS);

Recognizing the work of WHO in promoting laboratory biosafety;

Acknowledging that a number of Member States do have in place effective laboratory biosafety controls and guidelines for laboratory practice in order to manage the risks to laboratory workers and the community from microbiological agents and toxins;

Recognizing that some Member States may not have adequate biosafety controls in place;

Noting that an integrated approach to laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins, promotes global public health,

1. URGES Member States:

(1) to review the safety of their laboratories and their existing protocols for the safe handling of microbiological agents and toxins, consistent with WHO's biosafety guidance;

(2) to implement specific programmes, consistent with WHO's biosafety guidance, to promote biosafety laboratory practices for the safe handling and transport, including containment, of microbiological agents and toxins;

(3) to develop national preparedness plans and national programmes that enhance compliance of laboratories, including those within the government, at universities and research centres and in the private sector, particularly those handling highly virulent microbiological agents and toxins, with biosafety guidelines for laboratory practices;

(4) to mobilize national and international human and financial resources to improve laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins, in order to minimize the possibility of laboratory-acquired infections and resultant spread to the community;

(5) to cooperate with other Member States to facilitate access to laboratory biosafety equipment, including personal protective equipment and containment devices, for the prevention and control of laboratory-acquired infection;

(6) to encourage the development of biological-safety training programmes and competency standards for laboratory workers in order to improve safety awareness and safe laboratory practices;

2. REQUESTS the Director-General:

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- (1) to ensure that WHO plays an active role, in accordance with its mandate, in the task of improving laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins;
 - (2) to provide support to other relevant programmes and partners in strengthening their efforts to promote improved laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins;
 - (3) to provide support for the generation and sharing of knowledge and experience among Member States for enhancing laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins, through, inter alia, the regular update of relevant WHO guidelines and manuals in consultation with all Member States with a view to accommodating their concerns;
 - (4) to provide, in response to requests from Member States, technical support for strengthening laboratory biosafety, including containment of microbiological agents and toxins;
 - (5) to report regularly to the Executive Board on implementation of this resolution.

(Ninth plenary meeting, 25 May 2005 –
Committee A, seventh report)