



**Governing Council
Sixty-fourth Session**

GC/64/8
20 March 2022

Lyon, 12–13 May 2022
By web conference

**BIENNIAL REPORT OF
THE OCCUPATIONAL HEALTH AND SAFETY COMMITTEE (OHSC), 2020–2021**

1. The IARC Occupational Health and Safety Committee (OHSC) is composed of 14 members chosen to represent each laboratory floor, the epidemiology groups, the Biological Resource Centre (BRC), the Latarjet building and the Administrative Services Office (ASO). In addition, the Laboratory Safety Officer is part of the OHSC. In the time that IARC had a physician on staff (May 2020 to July 2021) during the past biennium, the Staff Physician was also a member of the committee.
2. The OHSC met six times during 2020–2021. The minutes of each meeting are posted on the Intranet.
3. Since June 2020, Dr Michael Korenjak has been appointed Chair of the OHSC, replacing Dr Rosita Accardi-Gheit. Mr Christophe Lallemand has joined the Committee as representative of the BRC (replacing Dr Elodie Caboux), and Dr Michael Korenjak is the new representative of the 7th floor (replacing Mrs Marie-Pierre Cros who retired).

General well-being

4. An appropriate First Aid response is critical in case of accidents or sickness in the workplace, even more so when the work includes laboratory activities. The IARC Security Team, a trained group of IARC personnel, is responsible for the First Aid response during official working hours (8:00 to 17:00). However, IARC offices and laboratories are also occupied outside official working hours. In addition, the presence of First Aid-trained staff in different IARC units and on various floors would considerably reduce the response time in case of an incident. Therefore, the OHSC proposed a First Aid training for certain staff to support the Security Team outside working hours and to have properly trained people on different floors and units. With financial support from HR and the IARC Administration, two initial in-person training sessions (Prevention and First Aid Level 1) were organized. Priority was given to general and biosafety level 3 laboratory workers and laboratory workers in general for the two first training sessions. The trainings were given to 20 volunteers by the Comité d'Animation Sociale et Culturelle of the Lyon Fire Brigade on 21 October and 19 November 2021, and it was very well received by the participants. In a second phase, the training is planned to be expanded to non-laboratory workers in the future.
5. The Quality of Work Life (QWL) initiative is aimed at harmonizing various initiatives that strive to ensure and promote quality of work life at IARC. As part of this, a working group on the “Prevention and treatment of psychosocial risks” was established with close involvement of the OHSC and the IARC Staff Physician. After initial discussions within the group, the “Take 5” initiative was established and integrated into the virtual, monthly IARC administrative town hall meetings. It was based on a short questionnaire concerning relevant and pre-selected topics related to psychosocial risks at the workplace and in

connection with the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Based on the questionnaire results, a brief information session highlighting relevant guidelines, professional support mechanisms, and coping strategies were presented in the subsequent “Take 5” session. The “Take 5” initiative came to an end following the departure of the Acting Staff Physician.

6. The issues related to not having a stable Staff Physician have been brought up by the OHSC several times over the past years and they have been discussed with HR and the administration, as have the difficulties in recruiting this position. Some of these issues include the handling of sensitive medical cases, the follow up of staff health, entry and end-of-contract medical examinations, pregnancy and laboratory activities, etc. Between May 2020 and July 2021 Dr Michel Baduraux temporarily covered the vacant position, which was of utmost importance during the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic. Unfortunately, due to his status as retiree, Dr Baduraux did not have his contract extended after July 2021. Until the recruitment of the future IARC Staff physician, WHO medical doctors from Geneva are coming to IARC twice a month, to provide medical support. This is, however, complicated by their limited visits and the fact that they are not familiar with all the specific requirements related to the laboratory work carried out at IARC. The position of a shared senior P level Staff Physician between IARC and the WHO Academy has been negotiated by IARC Administration in 2021, advertised at the end of 2021 and is planned to be filled in 2022.

7. The OHSC is part of a working group dedicated to “Living and working in the Nouveau Centre”. The work started in the end of 2021 and focuses on general procedures to be applied in the Nouveau Centre. The majority of this work will continue in 2022.

Laboratories

8. IARC laboratory workers spend most of the day at laboratory benches carrying out experiments. Laboratory chairs are an essential equipment used on a daily basis and for extended periods of time, and the quality of the chairs is important for a good working posture, back support, etc. The OHSC, with the help of the laboratory units, initiated an inventory of all laboratory chairs at IARC. Most chairs were very old, as they have never been systemically replaced, and many of them did not meet basic quality requirements. Based on the provided information, the IARC Administration agreed to provide a budget for the replacement of laboratory chairs and stools. In two stages, 122 chairs and stools were replaced, based on age and quality of the old equipment, as well as the needs for the Nouveau Centre. This replacement effort was very well received by the laboratory personnel.

9. Certain IARC laboratories, on the 13th floor in particular, are quite physically isolated and rarely occupied by more than one person at a time. The OHSC initiated discussions with the concerned personnel and research teams and with ASO to find a solution. In order to improve the safety of laboratory workers, a solution based on fall detection sensors was implemented. The sensors are operated through an external provider. IARC personnel can contact the provider directly in case of an emergency, or if the individual falls the provider will receive a signal and try to contact the person through the badge. In case of no response the IARC reception will be contacted immediately. The concerned IARC personnel is satisfied with the implemented solution. Due to the layout of the Nouveau Centre (with all the laboratories on the same floor), there should be fewer situations in which laboratory staff will be completely isolated.

10. In response to the modified working procedures and guidelines related to the SARS-CoV-2 pandemic, the OHSC, together with the Laboratory Steering Committee (LSC), drew attention to the need of providing easy access to disposable protective masks for laboratory workers through the IARC common

store. This need was based on the requirement for laboratory workers to come to IARC on a daily basis and having to wear a separate mask in the laboratories as opposed to outside. Based on the request, disposable masks were added to the assortment of the common store, which was well received by laboratory personnel.

11. The OHSC noted that the contact time of a newly proposed cleaning product by the contracted cleaning company was considerably higher (5–15 minutes) than for the previously used product (~1 minute). Given that the general procedure for cleaning of lab benches does not allow sufficient time for effective soaking of the cleaning product, a disinfectant with a shorter contact time would be preferential. In order to decide on a better suited replacement product, the OHSC reviewed various cleaning products and their availability. The cleaning company then chose the new cleaning product from the assembled list of suitable products.

12. The OHSC was closely involved in reviewing guidelines for the reception of potentially SARS-CoV-2 contaminated biological samples, prepared by the LSB Group.

Radioprotection

13. As all work with radioactivity was stopped, all remaining waste was properly managed, the probe of ^{63}Ni in the Gas chromatograph was removed, and the certification of the absence of contamination in IARC laboratories has been delivered by an external company. Dr Villar, the “personne compétente en radioprotection” for the Agency, prepared all documents to suspend the radioactivity work authorization valid until 4 February 2024. This procedure was validated by the “Autorité de Sûreté Nucléaire” on 29 April 2021.

Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) authorization

14. The current agreement to use Genetically Modified Organisms (GMOs) delivered by the “Commission de Génie Génétique” of the “Ministère de l’Enseignement Supérieur et de la Recherche” is still valid until 21 November 2023. This body verifies the proper installation, safe working conditions and proper waste disposal processes depending on the classification of GMOs used.

Incidents and accidents

15. This item concerns accidents and identification of potentially hazardous situations for IARC personnel during the biennium. Two different types of work accidents were reported during the last biennium: lab accidents (2), commuting accident (3). The circumstances of each accident were evaluated and rectifications made, when appropriate, to prevent associated risks of recurrence.