

MINUTES
NIOSH Board of Scientific Counselors
Arlington, Virginia
April 23, 2008

Introductions, Announcements, and Approval of Minutes

Dr. Sarah Felknor, Chair, called the 51st meeting of the NIOSH Board of Scientific Counselors to order. Other Board members attending were: Ben Amick, William Bunn, Joel Haight, Catherine Heaney, Eric Lamar, Mei-Li Lin, Linda McCauley, John Mulhausen, Gurumurthy Ramachandran, Robert Reville, and Scott Schneider.

The NIOSH Director, Division Directors, NIOSH staff, and members of the public also attended. The minutes from the 51st meeting convened on December 13, 2007, were reviewed and approved.

Report by the Director

John Howard, Director, NIOSH, provided opening remarks.

Personnel Changes: With respect to new appointments, Captain W. Gregory Lotz was selected to fill the position of Director, Division of Applied Research and Technology (DART). Previously, he was the DART Associate Director for Science from January of 2003 to August of 2007. Most recently, CAPT Lotz has been serving in the capacity of Interim DART Director since the retirement of Dr. Mary Lynn Wuebkenburg in August, 2007. Captain Ken Martinez was selected to fill the position of Deputy Director, Division of Surveillance, Hazard Evaluations, and Field Studies (DSHEFS). Previously, he served twelve years in DSHEFS and most recently, six years with the NIOSH Emergency Response activity.

NORA Update: The National Occupational Research Agenda (NORA) began its second decade in April 2006. Currently, four NORA sector councils have focus pages on the NIOSH website. These pages describe sector-specific priorities and goals and the councils are seeking public comments. NIOSH intramural competition for NORA funding has completed external peer review and summary statements are now being prepared for the PIs. The 2008 NORA Symposium will be held on July 29 in Denver. NIOSH has a new field office in Denver and the Symposium will have a regional focus with 46 posters. Presentations will be available via a virtual symposium from July 30 to August 12.

Strategic Planning and Goals: The goal for safe workplaces has incorporated both the NORA agenda and the Worklife initiative. Joe Henderson of CDC was able to attend a goal-setting meeting in Cincinnati and the recent NA review of NIOSH construction program was discussed.

CDC has decided to review the goal setting for construction as an example of the process that might be done CDC-wide.

Program Evaluation: The Board review document for the implementation plan for the National Academies (NA) evaluation of the hearing loss prevention program is expected to be completed soon. NIOSH has received the NA reviews for the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing and Respiratory Disease Programs. The NA reviews for the Construction, Traumatic Injury and Personal Protection Technology programs are in progress and NIOSH expects to receive them in the near future. Drs. Christine Branche, Principal Associate Director, and Ray Sinclair, Senior Scientist, are evaluating the NA programs reviews from an internal perspective with respect to their merit to NIOSH and were both asked to provide brief comments. Dr. Branche mentioned that she has been having direct conversations with both NIOSH staff and management. Negative feedback has included the tremendous effort and difficulty involved with producing the evidence packages. Positive comments have included receiving helpful and objective evaluation comments and improved communication and collaboration among NIOSH divisions. At the Board meeting, Dr. Branche distributed a table with evaluation issues identified across programs. Enhanced surveillance capacity and data were needs identified by many of the programs. Dr. Sinclair mentioned that NIOSH expects to receive all of the NA reviews within the next eight weeks (by early July). Plans are being made to present the NIOSH implementation plan for the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing program at the next Board meeting. This presentation will be made by Dr. George Conway, the Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing Program Manager, who has been actively engaging stakeholders in the implementation process.

In follow-up to the discussion of NA reviews, Dr. John Howard mentioned that the real challenge will be how to allocate funding and resources to best address NA recommendations. For example, how do we make the appropriate investment in the future for the NIOSH Surveillance Program? He thought it would be helpful to receive Board input concerning how the available resources might be directed or re-directed. The Board stated that to provide such input it would be helpful to have information about how surveillance activities have been handled across programs and how these activities have changed over time. Dr. Howard suggested that a surveillance presentation that would include all NIOSH activities could be provided to the Board and this overview and discussion would require the bulk of time of one meeting. Additional issues raised by the Board included the possibility of revising the National Exposure Survey, whether Congress can direct money specifically for surveillance activities, the under-reporting of occupational illnesses and injuries, the need for surveillance partnerships, adding occupational questions to existing data collection activities, and the need to continue the involving the Board in implementation plans for all programs and tracking ongoing progress. Dr. Howard mentioned that a NIOSH Report “Performance Management: The NIOSH Experience” will document many aspects of the program review process.

Initiatives and Activities: The Director's update presented brief summaries of the following NIOSH initiatives and activities:

a. Sampling Strategies Manual: Staff is working on a web topic page to have all the updates from the November public meeting available for public comment. An internal NIOSH meeting was held in February to identify new additions for consideration and identified modeling, Bayesian sampling, and biomonitoring.

b. Nanotechnology Initiative: A Board workgroup meeting will be held on May 9th to review the strategic plan. Identification of gaps in knowledge is needed along with strategies to address these gaps. There exist strong pressures from various agencies and the Congress to have strategic plans in place for this research.

c. Asbestos Roadmap: This document has received peer review and public comments. A new draft will be completed shortly and posted for public comment under the "good guidance" practices requirements of the Office of Management and Budget. The document has expanded considerably from a first draft of 33 pages to the current draft of 107 pages.

d. Global Road Safety: Dr. Marilyn Fingerhut, Occupational Health Consultant, provided a summary of this initiative stating that the Program is designed for the general population and emphasizes the use of seat belts, helmets, etc. NIOSH representatives have participated in interagency meetings to emphasize workers and workplaces and avenues for improving road safety. NIOSH has started building partnerships separately and collecting good practices for driving and working on roads. An international meeting will be held in the Spring of 2009 to discuss success stories and share practices. One success story is an endorsement, approved at a United Nations meeting, to improve international fleet safety. The Board asked whether the Fogarty International Center could be a good partner. One Board member stated that the impact of road accidents on employees while on work-related travel safety represents a growing corporate issue and concern. Their company is focusing on education of travelers.

e. Diesel Study: This study of diesel exposures, conducted in collaboration with NCI over the past 10 years, is in the final stages of data analyses. NIOSH hopes to complete a report of the study by the end of the 2008. A court order requires informing Congress of the findings prior to broader dissemination.

f. Communications: Dr. Max Lum, Associate Director for Health Communications, mentioned that a new NIOSH Science blog has been launched and has received a good response. Enough material has been submitted to enable NIOSH to post a new topic every week. An article about the NIOSH Science blog appeared in CDC Connects. Dr. Howard has been impressed by the thoughtful comments received in the blog. Internal support of the blog appears to be quite strong. Dr. Lum noted that the blog is part of a larger effort in social media and there are efforts underway to develop metrics for documenting the success of the social media activities. Dr. Howard suggested a presentation on NIOSH social media activities be made at a future Board meeting. It was also mentioned that NIOSH has established a partnership with Telemundo to include worker safety and health topics in telenovellas. A storyline on construction falls is already scheduled to appear in one telenovella.

g. World Trade Center: NIOSH administers funding of approximately 250 million dollars to enroll thousands of workers/responders in the monitoring program. Currently a contract solicitation is being examined to include workers not residing in the New York/New Jersey area.

The Board requested a presentation on World Trade Center activities at a future Board meeting.

Budget: Dr. Howard mentioned that dwindling funds in the NIOSH extramural program may limit the Institute's ability to attract new investigators. Dr. Jim Newhall, Director of the Office of Extramural Programs, noted that an increase in the training grant funding will allow an increase in the number of Education and Research Centers (ERCs) by one to a total of 17. The ratio of awards to applications actually increased this year but inflation is affecting overall discretionary funds. The Administration is not preparing an FY2010 budget and the budget for FY2009 is expected to decrease. There may be a continuing resolution instead of a new budget in FY2009

Presentation - International Program on Safety and Health at Work and the Environment, ILO

Dr. Sameera Al-Tuwaijri, Director, ILO-SafeWork, gave the presentation. ILO is a global program and is active in developing international standards. Tripartite participation is the objective of this Program but is often difficult to get full participation. Efforts are made to provide technical assistance and some funding to member states. Goals of this Program include protecting workers in hazardous jobs by expanding protection, providing health and well-being initiatives, and demonstrating an economic benefit from protecting workers. With reference to ratification of standards to protect workers, the United States lags behind other member states. The ILO is developing a standard for protecting the health and safety of domestic workers. There is also a new effort at developing guidelines for management systems that will foster continuous OSH improvement. ILO is also involved in chemical harmonization of classification and labeling of chemical hazards with associated issues including multiple languages and literacy of workers. ILO is active in health promotion related to stress, alcohol, and tobacco, but the efforts are more concentrated in industrialized countries whereas developing countries concentrate on more basic needs. Dr. Al-Tuwaijri and Dr. Howard signed a NIOSH-ILO letter of intent to collaborate in the future.

National Academies Program Implementation Workgroup

The discussion began with Dr. Sarah Felknor, BSC Chair, raising the issue of how feedback would be provided to the NA evaluation panel on NIOSH implementation and relevant Board comments on that implementation. Feedback will follow the process outlined in the framework document noted in the briefing book. The Board asked how gaps that require more resources will be handled. Dr. Felknor noted that funding issues needed to be noted in recommendations to the Director, NIOSH, not to Congress directly. Dr. Howard mentioned that it was appropriate for the Board to recommend redirecting funds or to recommend seeking new resources. Dr. Howard also noted that recommendations may be of use to stakeholders for their own activities or in support of NIOSH efforts. He requested that the Board look first at the scientific and programmatic merits before considering funding issues. The Board asked whether recommendations will go anywhere else besides to NIOSH. Dr. Howard stated that it is a transparent process and

stakeholders can take recommendations wherever they wish. Dr. Howard further stated the NA reviews show a NIOSH commitment to scientific review. The Board cautioned that long-range strategic thinking is necessary and such thinking probably requires receipt of several NA reports by NIOSH and the Board. Dr. Howard suggested that the Board construct a tabular matrix of needs across programs and offer recommendations about how NIOSH should prioritize their efforts. Dr. Sinclair noted that the public comments are posted on NIOSH website that the Board can examine these comments in order to aid in making their recommendations.

The Board asked about timelines of completing reports and recommendations. Dr. Howard noted that temporal pressure was not really present given that the program and process continue. The Board discussions are certainly valued by the programs. Dr. Felknor suggested incorporating a feedback loop in the framework. The Board requested ongoing input from NIOSH staff as they implement the recommendations. Dr. Felknor suggested adding to the framework some feedback to the Board in order to broaden priorities for the Institute. Dr. Howard noted that an internal evaluation phase has begun to look across programs for priorities. The Board asked how work groups will be staffed in the future. Dr. Felknor said the first work group would concentrate on the framework and then work group would rotate members as time progresses. The Board suggested that there should be a standing work group to shepherd the process and then additional work groups to concentrate on different tasks.

Dr. Felknor asked whether the Board should form a new workgroup to concentrate on the cross-cutting issues. The Board decided that current workgroup members would continue and others can volunteer if they are interested.

Training Recommendations Workgroup

With respect to the Final Report prepared by this workgroup, the Board expressed appreciation and praise for the detailed report and the helpful logic model produced for NIOSH. A draft letter has been prepared that recommends that NIOSH move forward with a formal national needs assessment for training and professional development. With reference to the addition of the new 17th NIOSH ERC, it was questioned whether there are sufficient data to demonstrate the need for this ERC or how many ERCs are really needed. The Board noted that a NA needs assessment for training was completed about 8 years ago. The work group members stated that the Final Report must be leveraged then updated, looking at how graduates are using their training, what jobs are taken, etc. There is a need for more information on specific needs for, and outcomes of, training.

The workgroup moved that the full Board endorse the final recommendations of this Report. This motion was seconded and voting was unanimous in support. Dr. Felknor mentioned the draft letter and asked for the Board's consideration and possible endorsement. The Board endorsed the letter unanimously. Dr. Howard mentioned the need for sustainable metrics and also the need to identify what kinds of academic faculty are needed for the future of OSH. He noted that these issues were not addressed in detail in the IOM report completed eight years ago. The Board noted that the engineering professional board has a good model for evaluating educational preparation

in those fields and it may be useful for the Board or NIOSH to consider this model. The Board also questioned how small businesses can access training or trained individuals and asked whether NIOSH-OSHA collaboration would be useful for training needs and issues for small businesses.

Information Products Workgroup

This workgroup identified eleven recommendations that needed approval by the Board. The Board endorsed the report in the form submitted. Dr. Howard encouraged collaboration with ILO to address the needs of small enterprises and to disseminate information to them worldwide. The Board noted that most organizations, whether private, public, or NGO are small and a comprehensive approach is needed to reach all of them. What is the best way to give the non-expert effective tools? The Board also noted the critical need to develop new leaders as current leaders approach retirement.

Presentation - Work Organization and Stress Disorders Program

Dr. Steven Sauter, Division of Applied Research and Technology, gave an overview of the Work Organization and Stress-Related Disorders Program. He began by noting that significant changes in employment arrangements and management systems, which spiked in the 90s, were associated with demographic changes and job losses or shifts. In terms of government efforts and publications, concerns about work stress predate NIOSH.

The NIOSH Program includes three projects in surveillance. The Quality of Work Survey has shown an increase in percentage using skills over time and also in learning opportunities. Internal projects are examining a variety of variables related to ethnic variations, age, income, depression, and cardio-vascular disorders. Work Organization is among the most prevalent types of goals in the NORA sector strategic plans. Goals are oriented to prevention. Dr. Sauter cited a need for more prevention guides to be used by employers that should be developed by researchers.

Discussion following the presentation was extremely productive. The Board stated that construction goals include several work organization goals and raised the issue of organizational effects on safety, such as contractor-subcontractor ambiguity of responsibility for safety. The Board inquired which group(s) in NIOSH would address that issue or other issues such as time pressures on safety. Dr. Sauter noted widespread interest in work organization and safety and gave an example of needlestick injury with interest spreading beyond NIOSH to other parts of CDC. Historically, the Program began with stress interests but has expanded to include safety issues. The Board noted pay and compensation issues interact with organizational issues and also asked about intervention evaluations. Dr. Sauter noted that four studies involved organization design interventions for improving stress outcomes. The Board recognized the research advances but stated that more attention in the United States could be paid to organization issues and maybe global models might guide US efforts. The Board expressed the opinion that there exists a study

section bias against funding stress issues in the extramural grant reviews. Dr. Sauter stated that he recognized the bias but noted funding growth both inside and outside NIOSH over the last decade. The Board noted that there still is a general lack of occupational health psychology programs among the ERCs. Dr Sauter mentioned programs at two ERCs. The Board encouraged more integration of psychology and other public health disciplines and noted some NIOSH efforts in this area. The Board also asked whether stress evaluations can be inserted into health/productivity programs. Dr. Sauter noted high stress association with higher health care utilization. The Board mentioned that the typical OSH professional is not trained to think of stress or mental health issues and therefore, is not likely to focus on those issues. The Board encouraged more information transfer to those OSH professionals but recognized the challenges of accomplishing that goal. The Board also reinforced the need to understand productivity in relation to stress and health, noting increases in productivity over the years in the USA, and wondered if stress is a critical component. Dr. Sauter cited lean production and continuous improvement systems that apparently increase productivity but the work intensification does increase stress. The Board noted that speed demands will always be there in construction but there may be promise in participatory planning teams to eliminate bottlenecks and identify safety issues. The Board suggested that the work organization program should highlight some success in generating synergy (for example, quality of work life survey stimulated activities in other areas).

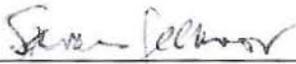
Closing Remarks

NIOSH is considering a December 3 or 4, 2008, date for the next meeting of the BSC. A request was made for two workgroups (nanotechnology and NA implementation) to meet in the interim so that their respective products are ready for discussion. Drs. Joel Height, Robert Reville, and Gurumurthy Ramachandran volunteered to join the NA workgroup.

The implementation plan for Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing will be the next plan considered by the Board at the December 2008 meeting. The implementation plan for Respiratory Diseases would follow Agriculture, Forestry, and Fishing plan. A suggestion was made to share the implementation plan with Board members prior to the meeting in order to facilitate discussion and recommendations at the meeting.

Potential future agenda items for Board meetings include the following: Surveillance, World Trade Center, Social Media/Communications, collaboration with OSHA to deliver training to small enterprises, and health and productivity.

I certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the foregoing summary of minutes is accurate and complete.



Sarah A. Felknor, Dr.P.H., M.S., Chair

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Date