

Minutes of the International Leptospirosis Society Business Meeting
Quito, Ecuador, 19 September 2007

AGENDA:

- Opening: agenda (president) (13.30 – 13.35 hr)
- General issues by secretary (13.35 – 13.40 hr)
--Travel award announcements
- Minutes of meeting 2005 Chiang May. Points of action (13.40 - 14.00 hr)
 - Re-examination of the issue of surveillance, including LeptoNet.
 - Formalization of ILS and its ability to lobby e.g. WHO/TDR for support.
 - (once-for-life) membership fee.
- TSC (Paul Levett) (14.00-14.15 hr)
- New format reporting MAT proficiency testing (Rod Chappel) (14.15-14.30 hr)
- Next ILS meeting (14.30-14.35 hr)
- Explanation of new president follow up system and Elections (14.35 – 15.00 hr)

OPENING BY PRESIDENT:

The President of the ILS, Dr. Rudy Hartskeerl, opened the meeting. He thanked the local organizers, led by Prof. Gabriel Trueba of the Universidad de San Francisco, Quito, Ecuador for making this meeting happen and for their skill and attention to the arrangements. He also thanked the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (grant R13AI075971) for travel grant support, and PanBio for general meeting support, additional travel grant support, and for continued support of the ILS. Approximately 60 attended the business meeting.

PRESENTATION BY SECRETARY:

The Secretary of the ILS, Dr. Joseph Vinetz, announced the travel award recipients, who are listed below. He thanked the National Institute of Allergy and Infectious Diseases, of the U.S. National Institutes of Health (grant R13AI075971) for travel grant support, and PanBio for general meeting support, additional travel grant support, and for continued support of the ILS. He also thanked the subcommittee of the ILS Executive Committee who collectively chose the travel award recipients. Dr. Vinetz expressed his intention to apply again for support for these travel awards. He noted the extraordinarily high level of scientific achievement internationally represented by the award recipients.

NIAID/NIH SPONSORED TRAVEL AWARDS

- **Jessica Ricaldi (University of California San Diego, Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, USA/Lima, Peru)**
- **Iskra Tuero (Universidad Peruana Cayetano Heredia, Lima, Peru)**
- **Michael Matthias (University of California San Diego, USA)**
- **Paula Ristow (Institut Pasteur, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil/Paris, France)**
- **Luz Olivia Castillo-Sanchez (Universidad Nacional Autonoma de Mexico, Mexico)**
- **Ridalva Felzemburgh (Fundacion Oswaldo Cruz and Ministry of Health, Salvador and Rio de Janeiro, Brazil)**
- **Piedad Agudelo (Instituto Colombiano de Medicine Tropical-CES Universidad Baranquilla, Colombia)**
- **Anne Spichler (University of Sao Paulo, Brazil)**

PANBIO, LTD SPONSORED

- **Ana Obregon (Tropical Medicine Institute, Pedro Kouri, Havana, Cuba)**
- **Guilherme Ribeiro (Centro de Pesquisas Gonçalo Moniz, Fundacion Oswaldo, Salvador, Brazil)**
- **Eneida Lopez (National Institute of Hygiene “Rafael Rangel”, Caracas, Venezuela)**
- **Erika Margarita Carillo-Casas (Department of Microbiology and Immunology, Universidad Autonoma de Mexico, Mexico City)**
- **Amaro Duarte (University of Sao Paulo, Brazil)**

GENERAL ILS ISSUES:

Minutes of meeting 2005 Chiang May. Points of action (13.40 - 14.00 hr)

—Re-examination of the issue of surveillance, including LeptoNet.

It was recognized that there are serious issues with surveillance, and that more robust approaches to surveillance are needed. These activities may be beyond the purview of the ILS. WHO performed an evaluation on the lack of interest in using LeptoNet. The results, recommendations and further actions were already presented by Dr. Hartskeerl as part of his keynote lecture.

In summary, WHO received 52/150 (30%) responses.

96% indicated support of LeptoNet

77% indicated intention to submit data to an improved LeptoNet

74% indicated that LeptoNet does not need to be simplified.

Problems and criticisms comprised the lack of a veterinary site in LeptoNet, the lack of data in LeptoNet, potential mis-use of data by others, problems in gaining access to LeptoNet and language problems.

Recommendations:

Technical and user-friendly improvement of LeptoNet and pro-active re-activation, maintenance and continuation.

Major modifications in the improved LeptoNet:

Creation of a distinct animal part, restricted accessibility to the database, flexible website manager access, appointment of a website administrator for the re-activation, maintenance and continuation of LeptoNet. The President Elect will have a major role in the administration of LeptoNet.

The ILS thanked Dr. Francois-Xavier Meslin for his leadership at the WHO to give LeptoNet the opportunity to address these issues.

—Formalization of ILS and its ability to lobby e.g. WHO/TDR for support.

The ILS has succeeded in being a vigorous advocate for a global assessment of the burden of leptospirosis. Under Dr. Hartskeerl's leadership, and recognizing the need for addressing this issue, the World Health Organization (WHO) convened an informal Consultation to Assess the Methods for a Global Burden of Leptospirosis in October 2006. One of the Consultation's main recommendations was to establish - under the leadership of WHO's Department of Food Safety, Zoonoses and Foodborne Diseases (FOS) - a Leptospirosis Burden Epidemiology Reference Group (LERG). The Director-General subsequently decided to establish LERG to act as an advisory body to WHO on matters of global leptospirosis epidemiology. The functions of LERG will be: To review epidemiologic data on leptospirosis burden; To identify technical gaps and priorities for research activities; and to make recommendations to WHO on the establishment of LERG task forces and other means through which scientific and technical matters are addressed. (Abstracted from <http://www.who.int/zoonoses/diseases/lerg/en/>). The ILS thanked Dr Saskia Hendrickx for the leadership at the WHO in initiating this process.

—(once-for-life) membership fee.

This was voted down almost unanimously (2 in favor, 48 against) as it was widely felt that this would impede the primary purpose of the ILS to be inclusive as it remains the major international forum for leptospirosis research and advocacy of advancing the scientific fields of *Leptospira* and leptospirosis.

TAXONOMICAL SUBCOMMITTEE REPORT

Presented by Professor Paul Levett, who noted the following:

- The handbook "Classification of the species *Leptospira interrogans* and history of its serovars" by Kmety & Dikken was published 14 years ago and is now out of date
- A revised and updated version is in preparation and will be web-based
- A position paper on nomenclature and taxonomy of leptospire is in preparation

- The minutes of the TSC meeting will be published in IJSEM and will be posted on the ILS web-site
- TSC reviewed the data on three proposed new species:
 - *L. kmetyi*, isolated from soil in Malaysia
 - *L. wolffii*, isolated from a patient with leptospirosis in Thailand
 - *L. licerasiae*, isolated from humans and rats in Peru
- These species names will be recognised after their valid publication

New serovars were recognized:

- Since the last meeting in 2005, one new serovar has been described
 - Serovar Sokoine (Mgode et al., 2006)
 - Serogroup Icterohaemorrhagiae
 - *L. kirschneri*
 - Isolated from cattle in Tanzania
- At least four other serovars are in various stages of characterization or publication

MAT PROFICIENCY TESTING

In a comprehensive discussion, Dr. Rod Chappel discussed considerations and recent developments in MAT Proficiency Testing. These are summarized as follows.

The MAT has long been with us

- It will (hopefully) not be with us forever
- It will be with us for a little while, until a new method or combination of methods are available that will:
 - (a) differentiate serovars
 - (b) be affordable and available in developing countries

International proficiency testing for MAT

- Is an ILS-organized and sponsored activity
- Six rounds have taken place, 2002 to 2006
- 97 laboratories in 48 countries participated
- Reference, Medical, Veterinary labs all involved
- Designed for low cost, wide availability

Proposed improvement: Internet Entry of Results

- Discussion between NRL and Health Metrx
- MAT scheme onto DigitalPT
- Appears to be technically feasible
- Minimal changes to software
- *Not yet certain*
- Hope to introduce from Round 7, 2008
- Expected that DigitalPT for Internet access will be available in Spanish and in French as well as English

- Expected benefit in Latin America

CHANGES TO ORGANIZATION OF INTERNATIONAL LEPTOSPIROSIS SOCIETY AND RESULTS OF ELECTIONS

It was generally agreed, as at previous meetings, that the primary purpose of the ILS is to enhance communication in the fields of *Leptospira* and leptospirosis, and towards this end, the main focus of the ILS is to plan meetings. It was further agreed that the ILS meetings will be held every 2 years to take advantage of rapid advances in the field, rotating between East and West as before.

Dr. Rudy Hartskeerl indicated the agreement of the Executive Committee with his recommendation that a slight modification of the leadership of the ILS should be implemented, suggesting that there be a President-elect serving 2 years, followed by a President serving 2 years, and serving as Past-President for 2 years. This would provide continuity in the goals of the ILS. This was approved by acclamation by the ILS members present.

It was proposed that addresses from ILS members would come available only to ILS members. A vote was taken, 22 in favor and 0 against. Prof. Ben Adler will adjust the current ILS list server and the website to reflect this. This information will be password protected. This will allow the ILS to track membership and website usage.

It was proposed that organizing committees of future ILS meetings will add US\$ 10 extra to the required registration fee. This would be for the benefit of ILS to have some basic funds for registration fee required for a formal registration in case this would be needed for the society. Otherwise, the funds will be used to support the organization of the next meeting. This proposal was put to vote and accepted with 16 in favor and 6 against

A call for applications for the next ILS meeting was announced. There was one country (New Zealand) with an expression of interest declared by telephone and email prior to the ILS meeting; no representative was present. Additional applications are being sought and should be sent to the ILS Secretary and President. A decision on the next venue is expected by March.

An election was held for the office of ILS President. Dr. Rod Chappel and Prof. David Haake were nominated. Dr. Chappel received 18 votes; Prof. Haake received 12 votes. Thus Dr. Chappel will be the ILS PresidentElect for the next 2 years, while Dr. Hartskeerl continues for his last term as President. Incumbents of the offices of councilor, secretary and adjunct secretary indicated their willingness to continue serving. In addition, Professors David Haake and Gabriel Trueba were nominated to be councilors on the Executive Board. They accepted the nomination, and were approved by acclamation.

SPECIAL RECOGNITION:

Professor Russell Johnson was given a special recognition for his important life-long career contributions to the field of *Leptospira*. He expressed his honor and surprise at the honor.

The ILS deeply regrets the death of our dear colleague and friend Dr. Aaron Alexander. Dr. Alexander devoted more than 40 years of his career as a microbiologist to the study of leptospires.

With no more business, the ILS Business Meeting was adjourned by the President.