EUROPEAN MEDICINES AGENCY
SCIENCE MEDICINES HEALTH

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European Network of Centres for Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance

Meeting Report - ENCePP Plenary Meeting

11 December 2009, 09.30 – 16.00

Chairperson: Peter Arlett

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*Inventory of data sources used for PEpi and PhV research
*Registry for PEpi & PhV studies
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6.1.1 Methodological approaches and first results
*Pregnancy registry and H1N1 vaccine monitoring (UKTIS)
*Background incidence rates (VAESCO Consortium)
*Immunocompromised patients (EuroSIDA Cohort)
6.2 Questions & Discussion
7. Other Presentations
7.1 IMI-PROTECT : Research agenda and status report
7.2 An example of a Consortium established upon regulators' request: Experience from the D:A:D study
8. AOB & Closing Remarks
8.1 AOB
8.2 Closing Remarks

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Summary of Discussions:

1. General Issues

1.1 Welcome and Introductory Remarks

On behalf of the Agency, Noël Wathion, Head of Unit for Patient Health Protection, welcomed all participants to this second ENCePP Plenary meeting of 2009.

He briefly introduced the new corporate identity of the European Medicines Agency which was launched on 8 December 2009 and highlighted some of the ENCePP milestones of 2009 and beyond, like the establishment of the ENCePP Steering Group, the public consultation on the Code of Conduct and Checklist of MRS and the electronic database of research centres. He also took this opportunity to thank everybody who was involved in helping to establish the inventory of planned and ongoing activities in relation to the flu pandemic and stressed that further contributions from ENCePP in this field would be very welcome. Finally, Mr Wathion looked forward to 2010 – the year when the concept of ENCePP studies will become reality.

Peter Arlett, Chairperson of the meeting, extended the welcome particularly to those ENCePP centres who had joined the network since the last Plenary and who were represented at the meeting. Valerie Simmons introduced herself as the new permanent EFPIA observer in ENCePP.

Unfortunately, a number of delegates who had planned on attending the Plenary had to cancel their participation at short notice because of flight cancellations due to inclement weather conditions in London.

1.2 Adoption of Agenda

The draft agenda was adopted without change. However, it was decided to postpone item 3. Election of ENCePP Partners to the Steering Group to be the last item of the morning session. This was done to accommodate those delegates who were delayed in their arrival due to the weather conditions.

2. ENCePP: Update on the Latest Developments

Henry Fitt gave a short overview presentation on milestones achieved in 2009 and a brief outlook of planned activities in 2010.

Special thanks were expressed to all active members of the ENCePP Working Groups, particularly the Working Group Chairpersons, as well as all ENCePP partners who provided comments during consultation on the Checklist of Methodological Research Standards, the Code of Conduct, the database questionnaire, the list of guidance etc.

3. Election of ENCePP Partners to the Steering Group

Henry Fitt thanked all members of the ENCePP Implementation Advisory Group (ENCIAG) - Francisco de Abajo, Hubert Leufkens, Ingemar Persson, Jytte Lyngvig, Luigi Naldi, Nicholas Moore, Deborah Ashby, Tjeerd Van Staa, Yola Moride, Hans-Georg Eichler - for their support and expert advice to ENCePP during the last two years.

He gave a short presentation on the election procedure and reminded delegates about the role of the Steering Group, prior to introducing the nine candidates who had put their names forward for election. The individual candidates were asked to briefly introduce themselves and elaborate on their motivation for their candidature. The two candidates standing for election in absentia – Miriam Sturkenboom and Gonzalo Calvo – were introduced by members of the ENCePP Secretariat.

Stephen Evans (London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine) voiced his disappointment over the fact that it had been decided against adopting the single transferable vote system. However, it was pointed out that it was also possible to vote for less than the maximum number of candidates.

The election results were announced following the lunch break. The representatives elected from among ENCePP centres to the Steering Group are:

1. de Vries, Corinne – University of Bath

2. Laporte, Joan-Ramon – Fundació Institut Català de Farmacologia
3. Persson, Ingemar – Karolinska Institutet
4. Sturkenboom, Miriam – Erasmus University MC
5. Traversa, Giuseppe – Istituto Superiore di Sanità

The Chairman congratulated the five newly elected SG members and expressed his appreciation to all candidates who put themselves forward for election. The first meeting of the ENCePP Steering Group is planned for early 2010 and the Agency is looking forward to working very closely with this group over the coming months and years.

4. Presentation and Discussion of Documents by Plenary

4.1 Public consultation on the *ENCePP Code of Conduct* and the *Checklist of Methodological Research Standards*

Stefanie Prilla gave a short background explanation and status report on the ongoing public consultation on these two key documents. The consultation period was prolonged to 6 weeks, the deadline being 5 January 2010 to allow for sufficient time for all stakeholders to carefully review the documents and provide comments.

All comments received will be compiled and put forward to the Working Group on *Transparency and Independence* and the ENCePP Steering Group to agree on revised final documents. A summary of the comments will be made available on the ENCePP website. The final documents will be sent to the ENCePP partners for endorsement before being published.

Ingemar Persson and Stephen Evans pointed out that best effort should be made not to delay the launch of the 'ENCePP study' concept to enable researchers to make use of the ENCePP seal as soon as possible in 2010.

4.2 Feed-back on development of guidance on methodological research standards

Susanna Perez-Gutthann, Chair of ENCePP Working Group Subgroup "Guidances and Recommendations", presented on the current status of the development of a guide on methodological research standards. A meeting of the subgroup had taken place the previous day in an effort to progress the work of identifying and compiling existing guidance in the field of PE & PhV which could be used to provide recommendations on specific aspects of study development and conduct.

The delegates were reassured that the ultimate outcome of this group's work would not be another checklist, but rather a short reference document providing links to existing guidance and new guidance only for areas where none or insufficient guidance is available at present.

During the discussions, it was pointed out that the one major difficulty in multi-national observational studies were the existing differences in national law on data privacy and protection and in the cross-country transfer of data. A guide on relevant national rules and requirements in this respect would be very helpful. It was agreed to put this issue to the newly formed ENCePP Steering Group for discussion at their inaugural meeting in early 2010 to discuss if this could be a task to be addressed by ENCePP, e.g. by a dedicated Working Group. As regards, data protection, Stephen Evans pointed out that new challenges arising e.g. from the developing computer science, which are not properly addressed by law should be taken into account.

Peter Arlett thanked the Working Group and its Chairperson for the work done so far on this very ambitious and important objective. The group is clearly moving towards a consensus in terms of scope and its intention is not to duplicate any existing information already available elsewhere. However, there clearly is need for additional help and ENCePP partners are encouraged to, for the time being, submit their input informally to the ENCePP Secretariat. A formal call for support will follow soon.

5. Presentations for Information of the Plenary

5.1 Electronic inventory of research centres participating in ENCePP

Stella Blackburn presented the current version of the ENCePP e-database of research centres, explaining the registration process and demonstrating the data entry and search functions. 16 ENCePP partners have volunteered to participate in the pre-Christmas pilot phase of the database.

ENCePP partners were reminded that, with the launch of the e-database of research centres, registration via the online data entry form will be a prerequisite to join ENCePP.

5.2 Update on inventories under development

Jim Slattery gave a short update on the status of the ***inventory of data sources*** used for PEpi and PhV research which will be released with version 2.0 of the e-database of research resources in Q1 2010.

Henry Fitt reported briefly on the ***registry of PE & PhV studies*** which will be developed during Q2-3 2010. He presented a list of 15 items of suggested information to be captured within this registry, inviting feedback from ENCePP centres as soon as possible. This list of data fields needs to be finalised before the end of January 2010, otherwise the development timelines will be jeopardised.

The following Q&A session focused mainly on the question of publication of the study protocol, particularly on the timing of the publication of the full protocol. The concern was expressed that publication of the full protocol before study start might conflict with intellectual property rights and therefore be not acceptable to some institutions. Instead it might be more appropriate to provide a synopsis covering essential elements at the time of study start and the full protocol only when the study is published. Alternatively, the protocol could be provided only to the ENCePP Secretariat without making it publicly available.

The Plenary was reminded that the draft ENCePP Code of Conduct foresees the publication of the protocol before the start of a study. Peter Arlett encouraged ENCePP partners to submit their comments in relation to this subject in the context of the ongoing public consultation on the ENCePP Code of Conduct which closes on 5 January 2010.

6. PRESENTATIONS ON A/H1N1 RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

6.1 A/H1N1 vaccines benefit-risk monitoring: EU added value

By way of introduction, Peter Arlett thanked all those ENCePP partners who had provided information on research activities to complete Annex 5 of the European Strategy for Influenza A/H1N1 Vaccine Benefit-Risk Monitoring. Although the strategy document has been published by the Agency on its website, as well as the ENCePP website, it was agreed to also circulate it directly to all ENCePP centres. In this context the need for continuous follow-up and monitoring of the planned and ongoing research activities was highlighted. Peter Arlett assured the Plenary that the Agency is committed to keeping the information as accurate as possible and that a follow-up questionnaire will be circulated soon.

Saad Shakir (DSRU) took this opportunity to express his gratitude to the team from DSRU, under the leadership of Deborah Layton, who in collaboration with the University of Dundee are undertaking some very important research in the area of vaccines benefit/risk monitoring.

Ana Hidalgo-Simon reported on the ongoing activities by the European Medicines Agency in A/H1N1 vaccines benefit-risk monitoring and on what remains to be done, particularly in the area of developing new methodological approaches in the field of vaccine safety and to further promote and establish collaborations between researchers.

Laura Yates from the UK Teratology Information Service (UKTIS) gave a presentation on the ongoing study focusing on A/H1N1 infection and vaccination in pregnancy and effects on birth outcomes, including some preliminary results.
==> *Post-meeting note:* this presentation is not available for publication.

Jan Bonhoeffer from the Brighton Foundation Collaboration presented on background incidence rates of specific adverse events in relation to H1N1 vaccination (VAESCO II consortium). It was highlighted that VAESCO II is a growing EU network interested in increasing their partnership. Any interested organisation was invited to express their interste to the Brighton Collaboration/Jan Bonhoeffer.
Further information on VAESCO is available at http://vaesco.net and http://www.brightoncollaboration.org.
==> *Post-meeting note:* this presentation is not available for publication.

Ole Kirk from the Copenhagen HIV Programme reported on the EuroSIDA study, a longitudinal cohort study of HIV-infected patients which has been extended to also collect information on the rate of H1N1 infections, vaccination, hospitalisation, seroconversion etc.

These presentations were followed by a short brainstorming session as to how ENCePP could facilitate networking in areas such as vaccine safety, pregnancy and exposure data, and on how to best maximise the use of readily available data and information.

Peter Arlett will take on board all suggestions made during this discussion when trying to identify and facilitate further networking opportunities in the coming weeks.

Jan Bonhoeffer agreed to initiate some further brainstorming at the level of VAESCO in view of what work could be done to further strengthen EU vaccine monitoring and to report back to next ENCePP Plenary on the outcome of these discussions.

7. Other Presentations

7.1 IMI-PROTECT : Research agenda and status report

Due to time pressure it was decided to postpone this item to the next ENCePP Plenary meeting.

7.2 An example of a Consortium established upon regulators' request: Experience from the D:A:D study

Ole Kirk presented on the D:A:D study (Data Collection on Adverse events of Anti-HIV Drugs), as a model of collaboration between academia, regulators, patients and pharmaceutical industry.

He confirmed that the success of the collaboration was based on the clear remit from the start in relation to the project's organisation, oversight and funding. The whole project benefited from the expert advice provided by the Oversight Committee including representation from all participating companies, academic organisations, regulators and patients' organisation. Funding received from the companies is channelled through a managing entity which further allocated the funding to the researchers according to a pre-established plan.

For discussion at the next ENCePP Plenary, Ole Kirk agreed to draft a list of lessons learned from this collaboration, and possible models for consortia in the area of post-authorisation.

8. AOB & Closing Remarks

- Pharmacovigilance Working Party (PhVWP): Co-opted members - call for expressions of interest

A call for expressions of interest for co-opted members with PhEpi experience has recently been released via the PhVWP. However, due to the limited response so far, it was decided to extend the call to ENCePP. Applications (including motivation and CV) may be submitted by e-mail to the ENCePP Secretariat; deadline for application is close of business on 11 January 2010.

Discussion of applications will take place during the CHMP/PhVWP January meeting. Successful applicants will be required to complete a confidentiality agreement and declaration of financial interests.

- Update on Call for Expressions of Interest for Drug Safety Studies

Henry Fitt gave a brief update on the ongoing call for expressions of interest and urged ENCePP centres to submit their applications as soon as possible. Only once a sufficient number of applications have been received, the Agency can start elaborating research questions that may be addressed by commissioning relevant studies. He reminded the Plenary that the shortlist will remain valid until 20 July 2012 and that applications are possible anytime before 20 April 2012.

The Agency is aware that it can be cumbersome to collect all necessary documentation for submitting the application, however it is more than happy to assist with any queries which will be answered promptly and should be addressed to: pass.tender@ema.europa.eu

He concluded by giving some examples of lessons learned from applications submitted so far, and giving suggestions of what to look out for when submitting an application.

Conclusions:

Peter Arlett concluded the meeting by thanking the delegates for attending the meeting and for their contributions, either via presentations or discussions.

He particularly highlighted the ENCePP inventory of research centres as a major milestone which should be operational within weeks, and again thanked the members of ENCIAG for their contribution to the implementation of ENCePP over the past years.

Finally, he expressed his gratitude once more to all candidates for the Steering Group election and congratulated the five elected representatives.

Action Points arising from the discussions:

- Preliminary dates for 2010 Plenary meetings to be circulated to all ENCePP centres. The date are also published on the ENCePP web page at: http://www.encepp.eu/events/events.html
- European Strategy for Influenza A/H1N1 Vaccine Benefit-Risk Monitoring: document to be circulated to all ENCePP centres.
- Inventory of examples of research activities in vaccines benefit/risk monitoring: Follow-up questionnaire to be circulated to keep information on the planned and ongoing research up-to-date.
- Further brainstorming at the level of VAESCO in view of what work could be done to further strengthen EU vaccine monitoring and report back to next ENCePP Plenary on the outcome of these discussions (J. Bonhoeffer).
- Draft a list of lessons learned from the D:A:D collaboration, and possible models for consortia in the area of post-authorisation, for discussion at next ENCePP Plenary (O. Kirk).

Annexes:
- List of Participants
- Presentations