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ENCePP Secretariat

European Network of Centres for Pharmacoepidemiology and Pharmacovigilance

Meeting Report – 7th ENCePP Plenary Meeting

30 June 2011 – chaired by Peter Arlett

Agenda:

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1. General Matters

1.1. Welcome and introductory remarks

The Chair opened the session by welcoming the delegates to this 7th ENCePP Plenary meeting, extending a particular welcome to the representatives from eight new ENCePP centres who attended their first plenary meeting:

- National Centre of Register-based Research, Denmark
- Quintiles Ltd., UK
- Centro de Farmacovigilancia de Asturias, Spain
- Consorzio Mario Negri Sud, Italy
- OXON Epidemiology, UK
- AIBILI, Portugal
- EPID Research, Finland
- Italian Pediatric Federation - Medicines for Children Research Network

The meeting was also attended by observers from Croatia, Bosnia-Herzegovina and Kosovo, an observer from the Healthcare Professionals Working Group (HCP), and observers from the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and Health Canada.

The introductions were followed by a number of announcements:

Meeting with DG Research

The plenary was informed about the recent visit of an ENCePP delegation to DG Research with the aim of exploring the possibility of enabling Framework Programme-funded studies to follow the ENCePP Code of Conduct and be able to obtain the ENCePP seal. The colleagues from DG Research were receptive to the proposal and are currently exploring with their lawyers whether FP-funded studies can be ENCePP studies.

Data Protection

The same ENCePP delegation also met with representatives from DG Justice in a very fruitful meeting. This was to follow up the submission of an ENCePP response to the Commission's public consultation on personal data protection. The intention is to raise awareness of the importance of secondary use personal (healthcare) data in pharmacoepidemiology and public health research issues in the context of personal data protection in the EU. The plenary will be kept informed of any developments.

ENCePP Study Register

The plenary was reminded that the ENCePP study register is open for business and partners are encouraged to populate it. P Arlett reminded the plenary that although the register is particularly focussed on non-interventional research, all and any studies can be registered in the spirit of transparency and sharing best practice. He highlighted that, whilst ENCePP studies need to be registered before study start, all other studies – ongoing or even finished - may be registered at anytime. This is an important way of putting study results into the public domain.

2nd ENCePP Info Day

The 2nd ENCePP Information Day in collaboration with DIA will take place on 7 November 2011. In contrast to last year, and in an effort to reduce the cost, this event will be held at the EMA premises. It is anticipated that the main audience for the info day will be industry.

ENCePP Partners' Forum

The ENCePP Secretariat is actively trying to encourage the use of the existing partners' forum by circulating less information and documentation electronically. Instead emails will be sent with links to the relevant postings in the forum. Partners are also encouraged to activate the automatic notification system which is built into the forum.

1.2. Adoption of agenda

The agenda was adopted without changes.

2. Report from the Steering Group

2.1. Feedback from Task Force "Access to data"

Helen Dolk, Chair of the Task Force "Access to data" and of the working group "Independence and Transparency", gave a progress report on the work of the task force regarding the review of the Code of Conduct relating to access to data provisions.

On behalf of the network, P Arlett thanked the task force for this important work and informed the plenary that the Steering Group will consider the report from the task force over the next couple of weeks and that the proposals will feed into the revision of the Code to be concluded before the end of the year.

The remit of the task force was only to look at the issue of access to data after the study has been published. As proposed by the plenary, it was therefore agreed that the issue of access to new data, biomarkers and pharmacogenomics would be taken into consideration in future discussions.

2.2. Feedback from journalist editor workshop

On behalf of the Steering Group Miriam Sturkenboom briefed the delegates about the meeting with journal editors which had taken place during the previous day. The workshop had been organised to introduce ENCePP and its key principles to journal editors and to obtain their feedback on the initiative. There was a good representation from some important journals (NEJM, BMJ, Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety, Cochrane Editorial Unit, Public Library of Science Medicine, Arthritis & Rheumatism), and the discussions proved both very positive and fruitful.

The event was opened with a brief introduction to ENCePP, followed by a lively discussion on the following topics:

- ENCePP and the ENCePP Study concept: scientific independence in commissioned research, transparency and application of methodological standards
- Findings of public health importance: sharing results prior to their publication
- The ENCePP Register of studies as a register for all post-authorisation studies

Overall, the editors were very positive about ENCePP and feel that the network has lots of potential. The voluntary nature of the network and the fact that all key principles and related documents had undergone a consultation process were particularly highlighted. They were extremely supportive of the transparency principle on study results and expressed interest in ongoing communication on this. There was complete consensus on the principle of sharing data of public health importance with regulators prior to their publication and that it is in no way an obstacle to their publication.

In conclusion, the editors are very supportive of the ENCePP register of studies, but would appreciate further discussion on the content of the database, particularly in view of what could be its added value in comparison to *clinicaltrials.gov*.

These positive sentiments were echoed by Joerg Hasford, himself an ENCePP partner who attended the workshop on behalf of the editorial board of *Pharmacoepidemiology and Drug Safety.* He observed that it was very useful to have the workshop. Most of those present were not particularly familiar with ENCePP. He was impressed by the high-calibre attendance at the event which indicates an interest in post-authorisation research. In his opinion, the presentations given by the ENCePP Steering Group were very good and everybody took part in a very open and lively discussion; no questions went unanswered. One of the issues arising from the workshop that he will take forward for discussion with his editorial board is that the sharing data of public health importance with regulatory authorities prior to their publication is in no way an obstacle to their publication.

Peter Arlett confirmed that, in order to consolidate the consensus, this event will be repeated in 6-12 months. In the medium term, the publication of a consensus statement is under consideration. An ongoing dialogue with editors is a very positive step for public health. Further discussions on the disclosure and sharing of results with regulators will be enormously helpful and will, ultimately, facilitate the work of investigators. He thanked everybody who supported and participated in the workshop.

2.3. Results of the ENCePP Partners Survey

In the absence of the Steering Group Vice Chair, David Haerry presented a summary of the results of the ENCePP partner survey which had been conducted earlier this year.

Although it may be difficult to ultimately implement all of the suggestions made, the feedback received is extremely useful and will be taken into consideration in the planning of future activities of the network. Some specific points arising from the survey have already been implemented or will be addressed in today's meeting.

Peter Arlett thanked all those partners who had taken part in the survey for their honest feedback.

3. Open discussion

3.1. Barriers to entering data sources into the database

The aim of this discussion was to explore the reasons for the apparent reluctance of some ENCePP partners to register their data sources in the ENCePP research resource database. Kevin Blake briefly outlined some background and efforts made to increase the number of registered data sources.

The following discussion brought to light a complex set of issues potentially affecting the response rate from ENCePP partners. All these were noted and will be addressed.

Some partners reported having experienced technical problems with their access to the ENCePP web portal. This will be investigated further.

3.2. Specialist networks and ENCePP

June Raine presented some slides outlining the imbalance between available expertise and the number of registered networks in ENCePP. The results of the partners' survey suggest that specialist network-building should be encouraged and gaps in expertise should be identified.

3.3. Plenary Survey: List of suggestions for funding topics – next steps

During the recent survey partners were asked to suggest research topics that they would like to see included in public funding programmes. A large number of topics have been submitted which were consequently grouped into four topics. Henry Fitt presented the list of suggestions with the aim to initiate discussion on how to make best use of this information and identify next steps.

The presentation was followed by an extensive discussion with a number of very useful proposals on how to progress. The plenary agreed that the topics should be used as a stimulus for networking.

In conclusion, it was agreed that the gathered feedback will be summarised and presented to the Steering Group, who already has funding as a broad topic on its agenda. A more concrete proposal will be presented at one of the next plenary meetings.

4. Definition of non-interventional clinical trials

4.1. Presentation of ENCePP Position paper

Gabriel Schnetzler, member of the dedicated task force on 'non-interventional studies', presented highlights of the key points of the position paper developed over the past few months. The current position paper seeks to outline broad concepts in terms of the understanding of the current Clinical Trials Directive, rather than a definition *per se*.

Peter Arlett stated this had not been an easy task and thanked all colleagues for doing this important work and for taking part in the discussions. There will be a meeting taking place next week of the Clinical Trials Facilitation Group (CTFG) and it is intended to start a dialogue with this group. He stressed that the position paper had not yet been adopted by the Steering Group and is a basis for ongoing discussion, including with the CTFG. Once adopted, the final ENCePP position will be published in a suitable forum and it is envisaged that it will form the basis of discussions at national level.

The EMA is requested to ensure guidance is available on the conduct of observational research in the context of the implementation of the new pharmacovigilance legislation.

4.2. Update on EC Consultation on revision of Clinical Trials Directive

Kevin Blake provided an update on the ENCePP response submitted to the Commission's consultation on the revision of the Clinical Trials Directive. While the response has been submitted in line with the relevant deadline, it is hoped that the work on the interpretation of the current definition of non-interventional trials will feed into the Commission's considerations on the future definition in a revised Directive.

Peter Arlett added his thanks to those who had provided their input, and particularly to the task force for driving this two-pronged approach.

5. Synergies between ENCePP and Health Technology Assessment (HTA)

5.1. Effectiveness research based on common protocols / methodologies

Ulf Bergman had raised this topic in his response to the partner survey and had consequently volunteered to present on it to the plenary. His presentation concluded in a proposal for collaboration on ADRs and therapeutics in the elderly. This proposal was welcomed by the delegates and it was agreed that bilateral discussions between Prof. Bergman and the ENCePP Secretariat would take place to work out the best method to facilitate networking and take this proposal further.

David Haerry supported Ulf Bergman's suggestion to agree on a standard method to measure renal function.

5.2. Views from HTA

Anne Solesse from Haute Autorité de Santé in France, and representing the European Network for Health Technology Assessment (EUnetHTA), presented on *Synergies between ENCePP and Health*

Technology Assessment. Her presentation particularly focussed on EUnetHTA's Work Package 7 (WP7) and a possible collaboration between the EVIDENT database and the ENCePP register of studies. She concluded by extending an invitation for an ENCePP representative to attend the next WP7 meeting.

On behalf of ENCePP Peter Arlett thanked her for the very helpful introduction on European action on health technology assessment. There are potential links from the EUnetHTA database to the ENCePP register of studies and a potential role for ENCePP centres in generating data and the use of this data by HTA bodies. ENCePP is ready to explore this collaboration and would be open to consider potential amendments to existing systems.

He concluded by inviting EUnetHTA to attend the ENCePP plenaries regularly to continue the collaboration and dialogue. The invitation to the EUnetHTA WP7 meeting was accepted with thanks; the ENCePP attendant will be identified in agreement with the Steering Group.

6. International initiatives on post authorisation safety monitoring of drugs

6.1. An update from the FDA

Gwen Zornberg, Associate Director of the FDA Office of Surveillance and Epidemiology, gave a high-level overview of the US Sentinel initiative which provided a helpful orientation on post-authorisation activities in the US.

6.2. An update from Health Canada

Robert Liteplo is Director of the Therapeutic Effectiveness and Policy Bureau, Marketed Health Products Directorate, Health Products and Food Branch. He provided an interesting update on the activities of the Drug Safety and Effectiveness Network (DSEN) which showed striking similarities with ENCePP in certain areas, both in terms of goals and structure.

In conclusion, Peter Arlett thanked both presenters for their contributions and expressed his hope that the close cooperation between ENCePP and the two North American initiatives will continue.

7. The Rosiglitazone Story

7.1. Motivation for an ENCePP study & Impact of regulatory action

Xavier Kurz provided some background and context of a drug safety study funded by the EMA. The contract for the study was awarded to the Department of Clinical Epidemiology at the Aarhus University Hospital who had been invited to present on the preliminary results of the study and provide feedback on the experience of conducting an ENCePP study.

7.2. ENCePP Study

On behalf of Aarhus University, Vera Ehrenstein presented results from the ENCePP study conducted.

Peter Arlett noted that the presentation contained some very interesting initial results and invited Vera to come back to the Plenary and present on the final results of the study, once available.

8. Session on Methodology

Due to time pressure it was agreed with the presenters to postpone this agenda item to the next plenary meeting scheduled for 23 November 2011.

9. Summary of discussions & next steps

Action points arising:

- New data, biomarkers and pharmacogenomics to be taken into consideration for future discussions on access to data;
- Dialogue with journal editors to be continued; journalist workshop to be repeated in 6-12 months; publication of a consensus statement is under consideration;
- Plenary comments on registration of data sources to be addressed through the Working Group on data sources (WG3) and update to be provided to partners;
- EMA is requested to ensure guidance is available on the conduct of observational research in the context of the implementation of the new pharmacovigilance legislation;
- Feedback on funding topics to be taken into consideration for proposal on next steps; proposal to be presented to plenary;
- Network building to be encouraged;
- ENCePP attendant at next EUnetHTA WP7 meeting to be identified;
- Session on methodology to be added to the agenda of the next plenary (23 November 2011);
- Session on individual case safety reports and signal detection to be scheduled at a future ENCePP plenary.

10. A.O.B

Working Groups

All three existing ENCePP working groups met in the margins of this Plenary.

Alejandro Arana was elected as Chair of Working Group 1 “Research Standards and Guidances”. Peter Arlett expressed his gratitude to Alejandro Arana on behalf of ENCePP to take on this role.

He also expressed his thanks to Helen Dolk and Miriam Sturkenboom for continuing to chair WG2 and WG3 respectively, and thanked all participants in the various working groups for their important input. Setting up these groups has proven a highly productive way of moving topics forward.

EMA Funding of safety studies

Peter Arlett announced that EMA intends to launch a call for tender for framework contracts looking at health outcomes research which is likely to be published in July. ENCePP partners will be informed as soon as it has been published. Procurement of this research is important to further support decision-making in the regulatory context.

ENCePP Secretariat

Peter Arlett welcomed Thomas Goedecke who will be working 50% on ENCePP.

On behalf of EMA and ENCePP he extended a thank you and good-bye to Camilla Smeraldi as coordinator of the ENCePP project. Camilla will be leaving the Agency to take up a post with the European Food Safety Agency in Parma.

Next ENCePP Plenary meeting

The 2nd ENCePP plenary meeting of 2011 will be taking place on Wednesday, 23 November 2011.

Encl:

Presentations (see hyperlinks in text)