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Note for the Editors: The Official Medicines Control Laboratories (OMCL) Network was formed in 1994, under the aegis of the Council of Europe, to co-ordinate the administrative and technical activities of the OMCLs, to facilitate the exchange of knowledge amongst authorities in Europe and to influence future development through harmonised common standards, based on the legal requirement for testing medicinal products. For more information, please go to: www.edqm.eu.

15th ANNUAL MEETING OF EUROPEAN NETWORK OF OFFICIAL MEDICINES CONTROL LABORATORIES (OMCLs), SPLIT, CROATIA 17-21 May 2010

The European Directorate for the Quality of Medicines & HealthCare (Council of Europe) held its 15th Annual Meeting of the Official Medicines Control Laboratories (OMCL) Network in Split, Croatia, from 17 to 21 May 2010. This conference was organised with the help and support of the Croatian Agency for Medicinal Products and Medical Devices (HALMED).

198 participants from 34 countries, representing 59 OMCLs, attended the general meeting as well as different specialised sessions during which the quality control of medicines through independent and coordinated testing and sampling plans at a European level was discussed, in the different fields of interest such as pharmaceuticals, biotech products and the official control authority batch release of human vaccines, human blood and plasma derivatives and immunological veterinary medicinal products (IVMPs). The meeting focused in particular on the importance of the exchange of experience and results, the development of policy and guidance for quality assurance and the implementation of databases to encourage work and information sharing.

The following points were of particular note:

The participation of OMCLs in the European Union Heads of Medicines Agencies Working Group on Product Testing has led to the establishment of a document highlighting the principles for mutual recognition of control results and the cost effectiveness of the Network. It encourages the agreement of all involved partners including the national competent authorities to extend the mutual recognition of test results to other activities of the Network beyond the Official Control Authority Batch Release (OCABR) and Centrally Authorised Products (CAP) surveillance programme, where this is already reality.



Many presentations demonstrated that the OMCLs are not only performing routine control of medicines but are at the same time striving to constantly improve their control methods. Similarly, the OMCLs revealed their ability to respond to challenges such as the pandemic influenza or the requirement to search for and apply alternatives to animal experiments. The variety of contributions of the OMCL Network in market surveillance testing includes among others, an example of collaboration with the Quality Working Party of the European Medicines Agency (EMA).

The issue of counterfeit medicines was again a topic of high interest and several presentations targeted specific testing approaches and the need for optimising international and interdisciplinary cooperation; development of appropriate databases was also discussed in view of the future Medicrime Convention of the Council of Europe.

The Human OCABR Network presented the results from the 2009 testing and its efforts regarding the reduction of animal testing in the course of batch release of vaccines and blood derived products.

Finally, the Veterinary OCABR Network elected the members of its advisory group who will ensure continuity of operation between the annual meetings.

In order to enhance the external visibility of the OMCL Network, logos for membership and for assessment through mutual joint audits were adopted and the policy for the use of these logos was approved.

The five day meeting and the numerous topics covered illustrate the wide range of activities in which OMCLs are involved and via which they contribute to guarantee an optimal level of quality of the medicines available throughout Europe.

[A political organisation set up in 1949, the Council of Europe works to promote democracy and human rights continent-wide. It also develops common responses to social, cultural and legal challenges in its 47 member states.](#)

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