

**Deliberations and Recommendations of the Panel Discussion on Biosecurity and Biosafety held during
the International Conference on Host Pathogen Interactions (ICHPI)
NIAB, Hyderabad July 15, 2014**

The panel, comprising 4 members and a moderator, presented their collective and individual experiences and views about the importance and necessity of increasing awareness and establishing guidelines, that can be implanted uniformly in Indian laboratories, to ensure that work on dangerous microorganisms is conducted in a safe manner and all materials, personnel and facilities that are used in these activities remain secure. The abstracts and slides of the brief presentations made by the panelists are available with the ICHPI organizers.

On the basis of the specific points raised by the panel members the following recommendations have been made by the panel. These recommendations highlight the existing lacunae in the regulation of biosafety and biosecurity activities in the country and they suggest some follow up measures that can be taken to mitigate these lacunae.

Present Scenario

1. A large number of scientists, technical and administrative personnel are working in India with dangerous microorganisms that are infectious to human beings and/or other plants and animals.
2. About 30 laboratories are operational in the country at Biosafety Level 3 (BSL3), however no uniform guidelines or standard operating procedures (SOP) have been prescribed from the government about how biosafety and biosecurity procedures should be practiced and monitored at these facilities.
3. The workers in biosafety laboratories are offered no certified training programs and hence the technical awareness and compliance in laboratories to biosafety and biosecurity procedures is either not adequate or is totally absent.
4. A reason for this un-uniformity in the training of personnel in biosafety laboratories is lack of sufficient technical documents related to biosafety and security in India and the absence of guidelines that can be implemented throughout the country to ensure compliance from the laboratories.
5. Activities of Institutional Biosafety Committees that are monitored by the ... section in the Biotech Consortium of India Limited (BCIL) but there are no inspections or approvals given by the BCIL appointed experts regarding the physical facilities

Recommendations

1. The Government of India (preferably the Department of Biotechnology) should take steps towards drafting National Guidelines that can be implemented in all laboratories working with BSL2/3or 4 microorganisms
2. The Government of India should prepare and provide technical guidance documents that can be used across the country by people who are either working directly with the microorganisms or are providing technical/administrative services at facilities where such organisms are handled.
3. The Government should establish an Academy for Biorisk Management that should act like and bridge between its departments and various sections of the population such as academia,

industry, civil society and legal fraternity. The Academy should also advise the Government of India about issues related to biological disaster management, international collaboration on biorisk management and developing risk mitigation strategies.

4. The Government can initially make task force/advisory group that should look into the implementation of the recommendations and take them forward.