In the Name of God

Report on

The 2nd meeting of the Ad Hoc committee for the Eastern Mediterranean Health Genomics and Biotechnology Network

2nd and 3rd of May 2006
College of Medicine
Sultan Qaboos University

EASTERN MEDITERRANEAN HEALTH GENOMICS AND BIOTECHNOLOGY NETWORK
EMHGBN

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Introduction:

The Eastern Mediterranean consultation for establishing a regional biotechnology network was held in Oman at Sultan Qaboos University from 2nd and 3rd of May 2006
for representatives of selected centers of excellence in (health-related) molecular biology, biotechnology and genomics in the Eastern Mediterranean Region.

Dr. Saeed Yahiai was introduced as the chairman of the network committee in Oman for "National Network". Afterwards Prof. Hassar was nominated as the Chairman by Dr. Bayoumi and then elected by other members.

An approval was made for steering committee selection at a congress in Genomics & Biotechnology early 2007 in Iran, with at least 2 people being selected from biotechnology industry (page 14 of Iran Feb 06, meeting report)

The next EMRO meeting will be in Iran during Sept 2006, which has been approved by the government of Iran. Attending the meeting will be health ministries of the Mediterranean region. The Ad Hoc members have decided that it will be an appropriate timing for the introduction of EMHGBN and also for encouragement of member states in establishment of national networks.

The members have also decided to change the title of the 2006 Tehran report in a way to convey that the network has been established and is no longer under consultation.

The members have agreed upon to list the biotech institutions from the different countries and update the database of the institution from all countries.

The ultimate goal of the network for the time being will be to bring people together.

Steering committee member criteria and election:

1) Next meeting will be the election for the members then delivery of the work to the permanent steering committee.

2) It should be by institution and also at individual level. A rule should be passed not to have more that one individual per institution.

3) In Iran meeting there are more candidates so there will be more people for selections in the steering committee and each country will have to hand in a nomination list well in advance.

4) The actual definition of the steering committee is not quite clear. So the election must be attached to a scientific congress thus the congress held in Iran is the most appropriate place, which is agreed by all.

5) If for political reasons, not held in Iran, it will be held in Oman 2008. One international symposium can be planned in Oman soon after the meeting in Iran.

6) The steering committee composition would be two from industry and 5 scientists. Among the seven members no two should be from the same country.

7) Opening of memberships could be through national election from each country and from these countries to elect 7 people.

8) Steering committee can be alternating every 3 years to have active members.

9) The host will be allowed secretary general out of the seven people.

10) The chairman will be selected through consensus or open vote.

11) Steering committee selection would be done through voting, one should be form the host country and 2 from the industry.

12) The countries that will vote are the present people and not active only.

13) National networks should be established before selecting the steering committee thus communication should be done through the network of a national member rather than individual contact.

14) Steering committee will only have a link to the national network, but will have nothing to do with it.

Steering committee selection procedure:

All the 22 countries have to come up with representatives
WHO can help by requesting the countries to make their own national networks and also to encourage selection in the network and recommend to ministries of health to fund the network and also the people.
Overall, this can be done through WHO/EMRO, small meetings by WHO/EMRO in each country to catalyze this process.
In regard to the congress in Iran, executive and scientific committee meetings has to be proposed to gather once in every 2-3 months.
Nomination will be made for executive board of the congress and further discussion is needed to find out what is expected from the members in the congress.
There will be a representative of the network in the Iran genomics and biotechnology congress executive committee, to help in organizing the meeting.

EMHGBN membership:

- Full member will participate as (university, hospital, research institutions, biotech companies private or public, R and D institutes)

- Associate members are only for individuals.
- The commitment of the institution must be approved by their respected president.
- Members of the society will be associate members and the societies will be honorary.
- Societies are joined as honorary membership and will only be supporting the network. Honorary members e.g., WHO.
- In the network website, formatted forms must be established as application form to make a section for submission or admission.
- The executive board can give submitted members applications a provisional acceptance but the general assembly will have the final approval.
- The honorary members can not be in the steering committee but can be as acting members which can support the network with the help of EMRO.
- Requests for membership should be submitted to the secretary general.
- The associate members will have no power, but full members will have a say as national members.
- Full members will participate in the voting but associates will benefit only at scientific level.
- A fee should be passed to show commitments to the committee.
- For institution need approval from the national network but individuals can go directly to the steering committee.
- Eligible candidate institutes from areas with no network can still be considered for membership. The countries that are not represented have to be informed. These countries need to be helped by WHO to establish a network in this regard a letter should be addressed to the WHO.

Science policy:

- The need to establish a Science policy was highly appreciated by Ad Hoc members.
- Each country will report on biotech networking in the Iran congress.
- The science policy is significantly needed to set up the targets and the funding strategy.
- EMHGBN should speak as a democratic body, as a result of this act people respect the network decisions and have more to offer than as individuals.
- To become a funding agency to help scientists in research.
- Oversee what is happening to the network and create a database of institutions available in other countries.

- The first role of the network is to bring as many scientists as possible to meet, the ad hoc is expecting the host to pay for the accommodation and the person coming will pay for the tickets.

Workshop arrangement:

- A workshop in the name of the network will be suggested (Bioinforamtics), during the congress. Date: 6th and 17th of January 2007
- Prof. Bayoumi will invite one person from the Cambridge bioinformatics to run the workshop.
- Prof. Bayoumi will organize the workshop; Prof Hassar will be sending Prof Riad the details of the expert in microarray from Poitier Morocco.
- COMSTECH will be financing 70% for a workshop in January 2007 in Oman, (40,000 dollars will be given from COMSTECH and 20,000 dollars from WHO and S.Q.U).
- Two people from our network can participate in.
- Attendants will be picked based on research background (CV).
- So the three names will be put the Sultan Qaboos Univeristy, COMSTECH and the EMHGBN network
- Establishment of a lab to cooperate as a network which will be the centre for services and training. Thus it will be a common platform to share the equipments with other members of the network.

By Laws:

The Ad Hoc committee has decided to set the By Laws:

1) Dr Sardari will be preparing a draft and will receive a feedback from the members that will be approved legally.

2) The laws have to be put forward to be agreed by the general assembly and to be adopted, but have to be put in a legal manner.

3) They should include; Names, Aims, Members, and also the role of the WHO, EMRO supporting.

4) To be drafted and forwarded to the members.

5) People present in this meeting will have to first approve the by laws and then the steering committee.

6) Within the network, we will have the sub networks depending on the field, the specialties will be better together and develop more in this regard.

Funding:

- The members have decided to prepare an attractive proposal in this regard and it should be submitted to more than 5 agencies, COMSTECH, WORLD BANK, IDB, etc.
- Dr Afzal presented a proposal whom he has written on behalf of the Ad Hoc committee, justification is needed which will be done by Dr. Sardari as the EMHGBN Acting director then forwarded to Ad Hoc committee for final approval.
- In order to be able to succeed, we will highly need WHO support WHO/EMRO can help in coordination not necessarily financially, but still so many activities and programs needed to be passed to WHO for example in organizing meetings and its help for national network establishment.
- The Ad Hoc members decided not to put in any details when proposing only after meeting schedule the details will be needed.
- Initially only the secretary general will be mentioned in the proposal to be paid.
- The Ad Hoc can start to approach funding agencies like Islamic Bank, WHO.
- The AD HOC committee will appoint someone to follow up on the matter.
- Prof. Hassar as the chairman will address people on this matter.
- Secretary General will amend the document together with the chairman.

Strategic Plan:

The final strategic plan which was finalized and approved by the Ad Hoc committee:

1) Vision:

◆ To create and sustain value by being recognized as a player in the international biopharmaceutical, genomics and biotechnological industry aiming at promoting health in the region.

◆ Sustainable development of health genomics and biotechnology through facilitation of high quality R&D training and sharing information, experience

distribution and technology transfer in order to meet common and regional health needs of member countries.

2) Mission:

◆ To induce collaboration in production, training, Research & Development to be self reliant in biotechnology and industries production

◆ To facilitate cooperation between wealthy and poor countries to upgrade health standards

3) Goals:

◆To promote regional common health objectives through R&D partnership and collaboration
◆To facilitate capacity building in genomics and biotechnology through public awareness and promotion, training and educational programs.
◆To prioritize health related R&D in genomics and biotechnology
◆To support production of specific and new products
◆To meet internationally recognized standards in health genomics and biotechnology

4) SWOT analysis:

4.1) Internal Environment

4.1.1) Strengths:

1- Membership of some experienced research manpower in *Ad Hoc Committee.*

2- Involvement of a number of public decision makers in establishing the network.

3- Experience in creating National Biotechnology networks among member countries.

4.1.2) Weaknesses:

1- Uncertain financial resources.

2- Limited number of trained/expert manpower especially in the area of development and commercialization of the research outcomes among members.

3- Lack of effective prioritization of biotechnology research topics and communication among scientists and policy makers.

4- Lack of recognition of G&B potentials and capabilities in the member countries, such as human resources, laboratories, instruments, and etc.

5- Lack of advocacy of the research and G&B priorities among members.

6- Separation of the academia from economic world in the region and cost-benefit data.

4.2) External Environment

4.2.1) Opportunities:

1- Special support of WHO/EMRO in establishing these networks.

2-The international bodies such as, COMSTECH, IDB, TWAS, and etc, which support research and development activities in the developing countries

3-A great regional or worldwide market for the products derived from biotechnology processes carried out or initiated in the network

4- The possibility to carry out the necessary clinical trials in ethnic groups to develop new products in the member states according to Ethics.

5- Biodiversity and genetic variability of resources and diseases in member countries.

4.2.2) Threats:

1- The problem of brain drain among the member states

2- Political instability in some member states.

3-Limitations international collaboration in technology transfer and R&D activities

4- Paucity of knowledge towards G&B applications in dealing with the public health issues in the member states

5- Poor infrastructures for standardization and quality management

6-Inappropriate regulations/implementation and registration in IP system and biotech products in the member states

7- Inexistence of strategic alliances and underdeveloped collaboration culture among the member countries institutes/companies/organizations.

5. Strategies:

1- Taking the necessary steps for resource mobilization supporting the network operation and accomplishments.

2- Priority setting in R&D activities based on specific and common needs of the members.

3- Managing research and development projects in order to elevate the collaborative efforts among the member states for reaching a particular technology.

4- Strengthening the infrastructure to consolidate intellectual property right of network activities in order for technology licensing and to be able transfer and avoid any conflict among the members.

5- Collaboration with and accepting the membership of product developing centers including the companies involved in the clinical trial and commercial sectors.

6- Establishing common and integrated standard and quality control protocols in all research, development and production activities in the member countries.

7- Establishing national networks in all member countries in order to achieve recognize and attract maximum potentials and capabilities.

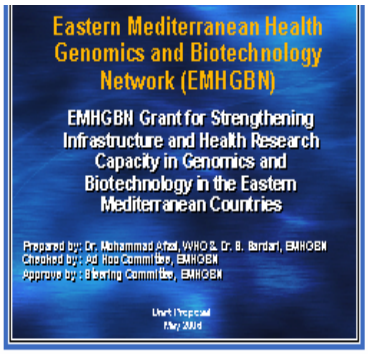
8- Implementing particular training programs to increase the research, development and commercialization capability of the members.

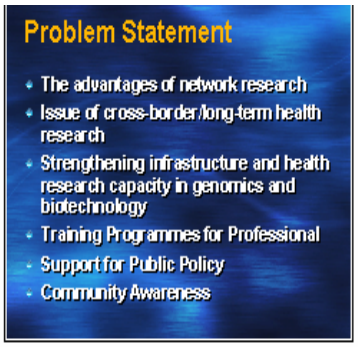
9- Setting Information and awareness programs for G&B applications designed for high-ranking managers, policymakers, international institutes, higher education students and the public.

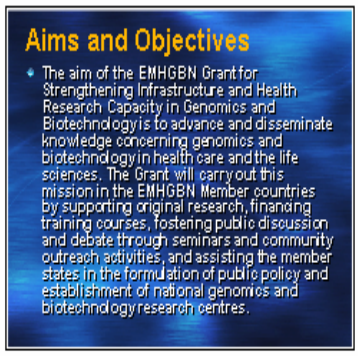
10- Assessment and control of activities and resource allocations through establishing indicators and regulations.

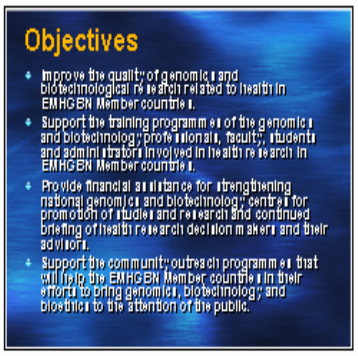
Appendix:

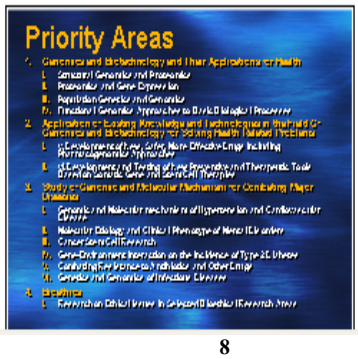
Presentations made during the meeting (by Dr Afzal)

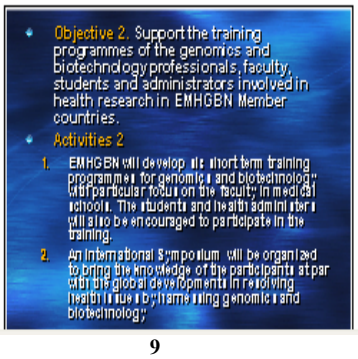


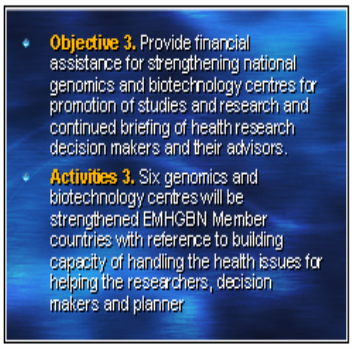












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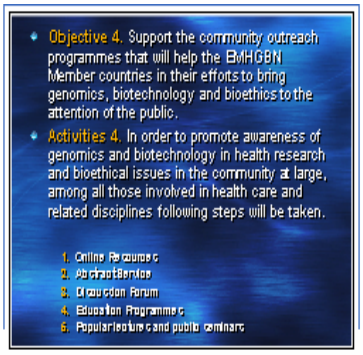

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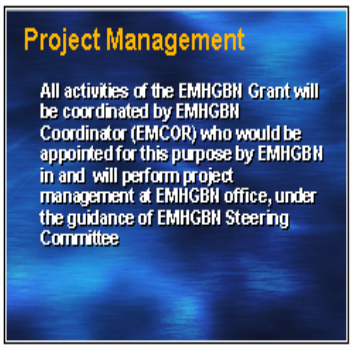

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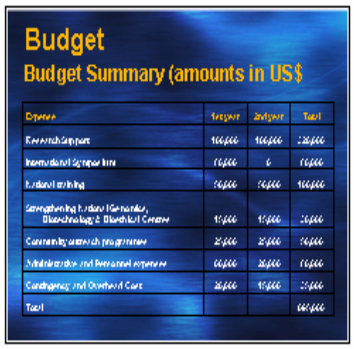

Expense	1st year	2nd year	Total
Research Support	100,000	100,000	200,000
International Symposium	10,000	0	10,000
National training	50,000	50,000	100,000
Strengthening National Genomics, Biotechnology & Bioethical Centres	15,000	15,000	30,000
Community outreach programmes	25,000	25,000	50,000
Administrative and Personnel expenses	10,000	20,000	30,000
Contingency and Overhead Costs	20,000	10,000	30,000
Total			600,000

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