

Summary Notes of the R2RA Interagency Work Group Spring Webinar

May 16, 2012, 2:00-3:30

Roll Call:

ATSDR:

David Fowler (in for John Wheeler)
Olivia Harris
Steve Jones

EPA:

Michele Burgess
Vince Cogliano
Geniece Lehman
Kira Lynch
Mark Maddaloni
Kathleen Raffaele
Larry Zaragoza

NIEHS

Beth Anderson
Danielle Carlin
Heather Henry

MDB:

Elmer Akin
Maureen Avakian
Larry Reed

Beth Anderson - Mutual Understanding Sessions: We want to focus on these mutual understanding sessions. We need to ensure that we have a common understanding of the areas of science that we each work in so that we can promote meaningful collaboration among the agencies in the long run. This will probably be done primarily thru webinars. We want to focus on the things that we use as a vehicle to share information, primarily with SRP investigators/grantees, but there could be others. We want to help the researchers understand the processes that happen at EPA and ATSDR. We want to talk about the program context for these topics. We would like to put together “logistics” for a timeline (such as an R2RA webinar every 3-4 months). The audience is SRP investigators, but others are welcome to join. If we use GoToMeeting or Adobe Connect, we can record them and archive them so they can be a tool that others can access over time. In addition, we might do something like this at the SRP annual meeting or a broader NIEHS meeting, or perhaps at other meetings. This is open for comment/discussion.

Michelle Burgess: We have regional risk assessors’ human health forums—that might be another forum. This might be a good opportunity to show what risk assessors do. One way we could benefit from what SRP is doing. It would be nice to find ways to make more connections with RA’s.

Steve Jones: Can we make these slides available after this call?

Beth: Yes, we’ll post them on the R2RA webpage.

We have a few suggested topics for webinars that we talked about on the last call. Since this was built around risk assessment, looking at IRIS, the Regions, etc., this seemed like a natural starting point.

Vince Cogliano and Geniece Lehmann: A focused discussion on the IRIS process would be helpful. This could lead to a better understanding by researchers by what would make their study designs more applicable to IRIS updates. This would be able to apply in multiple venues, but it would also be an excellent webinar.

Elmer Akin: It may be helpful to have SRP investigators submit their questions about IRIS beforehand to help focus the webinar on their specific issues.

Vince: That's a good idea. It would help us fashion the webinar to be most useful to all involved.

Michelle: PPRTVs (Provisional Peer Reviewed Toxicity Values)—We have research needs in that area, too. It's not the full-blown IRIS, but we're constantly getting requests for chemicals from the SF tech support center.

Kathleen Raffaele: It would be useful to have what Vince and Larry were talking about- how researchers could make small changes in study designs to make it useful to risk assessors.

Beth: From a regional perspective, is there a different need or discussion that we'd have on what goes on in the regions with regard to risk assessment?

Larry Reed: Mark and I chatted this morning about how the regions would be able to describe what goes on in the RA process in the SF program: what is needed, what are the problem areas, where they've been able to collaborate before.

Michelle: There is a relatively new group, the OSWER Regional Risk Assessment Human Health Forum...This was formed after an earlier risk assessors' group. There will be a meeting in July in Denver, and it would be good to try to connect some dots with this work group's efforts.

Michelle/Kathleen: There is a lack of information that SRP was doing all this community involvement work—We didn't know the breadth of work. It would be good to let people know who the people are to whom the regions or the communities can channel their research needs.

Steve Jones: ATSDR could also come up with several ideas for mutual understanding webinars.

Olivia Harris: A lot of processes are being updated right now with procedure changes, etc. on the way ATSDR is doing things. The process of coming up with specific webinars can be done, we just need to think about it.

Elmer: Here's one additional thought—the regional risk assessors use IRIS numbers for toxicity, but in the RA process, they must deal with the exposure assessment. The sources of exposure data would be of benefit for the SRP researchers to understand how this works. This could also involve ATSDR, —how does ATSDR deal with single exposures, multiple risks, exposure assumptions, as well as how that's factored into ATSDR's health assessment?

Kira Lynch: From my standpoint, this is a great topic. This can be documented in a way that can be used to help communicate with the public. We get that question all the time: "How is ATSDR coming up with these findings vs. SF RA, vs. health advisories for fish for the health department?" It all comes down to exposure assumptions.

Olivia: Our Dept. of Community Health just released their update on the Exposure Factors Handbook. Their input could be helpful.

Olivia: I was surprised at how much of the data came from the CDC and things they accessed in the NHANES study. What data would this group like the National Center for Health Statistics to cover in the future? There's a method for nominating questions for them to address.

Mark: The process is good at telling you what's there, but not good at telling you what's not. This should be teased out—what are we lacking in our exposure factors.

Beth: That could be interesting too for the investigators.

Mark: Also how we use them. Many probably don't know that.

Beth: Let's work with Larry and Elmer to flesh this out and see how things gel together and we'll go back to the entire group with a plan for action.

Larry: First, if we could work with Vince and Geniece, and find a way to make it a more interactive discussion, so researchers could find out more about the IRIS process, but focus a bit more internally. That might be doable in the near future.

Elmer: For the IRIS process webinar, IRIS is well-known, and everyone probably has some questions about it. It would be beneficial to develop the webinar to have the investigators submit a question about what they really want to know. Maybe there are specific questions they want answered...that would be good to help us prep for the presentation. It would be good to find out what's on people's minds.

Steve and Olivia: ATSDR had their science symposium last month (April 2012) ... Olivia observed. Elmer was a panelist.

Steve: Michelle was there also. The topic was the Future of Science at ATSDR. The goals were to evaluate scientific methods and make improvements on them. There were 2 tracks, one on health assessments at ATSDR, the other was a toxicology track session. Each group devised specific recommendations to bring back to the group at large.

Michelle: We broke out into groups—one on health assessments, other on toxicity assessments. One thing that was interesting was that mixtures kept rising to the top of the discussion. How do we deal with them in our program? Things were discussed as far as research opportunities. On day two, we looked at priority chemical list, and formed two groups—addressing what chemicals in what quantities are found at SF sites to help set their priorities. The second group focused on additional studies on potential health effects. Our scope is on a site, but their scope is larger. How can our data help them (e.g. air toxics)? It was a broad audience. They are going to go look at the recommendations and provide an internal report.

Michelle: One positive outcome: there is a GIS mapping and analysis effort going on. Their emphasis is slightly different, but we've been doing something similar. We were able to put the folks in touch with each other, and they are adding in census data.

Mark: Another late breaking science issue is that the CDC finalized their embracing of the recommendations from the Advisory Panel on Childhood Lead Exposure Prevention. There will probably be a big ripple effect to come out of that. The research and regulatory communities need to be thinking progressively on this and how we're going to accomplish this new national goal. We in Superfund have relied on biokinetic models to set cleanup goals—95% of the children with blood lead levels below 10 mg/dl, now we're going for 97.5 % below 5 mg/dl. We may be butting up against background noise of our model...We'll need to improve the modeling to get at these goals.

Heather Henry: I wonder where the Provisional Peer Reviewed Toxicity Values for Superfund (PPRTV) fit with the IRIS discussions. The PPRTVs would in theory utilize lots of our research....if our grantees don't know about IRIS, they probably don't know about PPRTV. The processes are similar, but my understanding is that PPRTV is a part of the effort to fill in data gaps.

Beth: We'll capture that as the webinar PPRTVs, we'll need to work with Michelle and flesh that out as a webinar topic.

Project Updates

PCB indoor air exposures:

Mark: We've been working with University of Iowa SRP. Several of us met at SOT to discuss common capacities of issues and a proposal grew out of this to submit a workshop proposal for next year's SOT. It would involve speaking on the IRIS process, and Iowa discussing an improved inhalation toxicity process. We're trying to address the large uncertainty factor.

Geniece: We found that the faculty at U of Iowa has been interested in coming up with research strategies that would provide useful data for meeting IRIS PCBs needs. The only stumbling block is funding. There is no lack of willingness to do the work. They just don't have the grant funds for it yet.

Soil vapor intrusion:

Larry: SRP had discussions with ATSDR and EPA about specific site issues. Data are being shared to assess vapor intrusion threats. Kelly Pennell and Eric Suuberg at Brown have been contacted on site-specific issues.

Kathleen: We're trying to get together —OSWER is working to address vapor intrusion at underground storage tanks, updating the hazard ranking system, and seeing what collaboration can be done at EPA headquarters. We'll have another progress report on next call.

BRIDGES:

Kira: I've worked with OSU, they have been deploying and monitoring her (Kim Anderson's) passive diffusion samplers...in the Lower Duwamish, also in Portland Harbor. We're working to figure out how to incorporate the data into future performance monitoring. We're starting to get some data to understand how those tools can be used.

Spinoff Projects:

Beth: Last September, we picked 3 areas to see if we could make connections between the science and the application.

Region 10 RARE project:

This is an EPA ORD program in Region 10. Roseanne identified work going on at the Columbia SRP and Dartmouth SRP that would be useful in scoping their site-specific study. Region senior ecologist Bruce Duncan was involved, too. These conference calls assisted Region 10 in refining and scoping out their project.

Elmer: I spoke to Bruce this am. He is working on the plan for the study, and was glad of Columbia's contributions. This is another SF site where Arsenic was found in sediment but at a very low level, but when shellfish were sampled, the clams had a high inorganic Arsenic content. It created a research need. Roseanne put together Bruce and Columbia folks, who have knowledge of ecological workings of Arsenic and other metals in surface waters. This collaboration will continue. R10 was appreciative of us putting them in touch with Columbia.

Two other spin off projects:

Use of phosphate amendments for lead-contaminated soil: Mark noted that this is causing concern with EPA. There is a need for work on questions about phosphate amendments' applicability, limitations, and benefits. SRP has done some follow-up work...and will bring in SRP researchers to assist in the analysis of next steps. It has cross-regional applications on how to deal with lead-contaminated soil.

SRP has offered assistance at a recently NPL listed uranium site: Peggy O'Day, a previous SRP grantee, thought she could assist with that site. They are about to name an RPM, and they are happy to have researcher assistance.

Heather: Mark was helpful in linking Puerto Rico in-house sampling results that might be useful for the ongoing Puerto Rican preterm birth studies that are being done as part of the Northeastern SRP center. It would be good to know what has developed.

Next SRP seminar—August 7-8, 2012 at ATSDR, Atlanta

SRP 25th Anniversary Meeting—Raleigh, Oct 21-24, 2012

This overlaps with **NARPM**, but we will have a session (at NARPM) on the 25th.

Annual report will be prepared—summary of progress

Also, we want to remind the work group members that we have a **website:** <http://1.usa.gov/1hHLR0j>