

The reformed International Council for Standardization in Hematology (ICSH)

The International Council for Standardization in Hematology (ICSH) was originally founded as a standardizing committee associated with the European Society of Hematology in 1963. The structure of the council was ratified in 1964 and the Secretariat was subsequently registered legally as an independent foundation in the Netherlands in 1968. Following this, a revised constitution was ratified in 1990 and the elected committee was registered.

The basic aim of the ICSH was, as it is now, to achieve reliable and reproducible results in laboratory analysis, primarily concerning diagnostic haematology. Now all guidelines and recommendations will include levels of evidence where appropriate.

From the 1970s until approximately 2000, the Managing Board met at least annually and the work of the various committee members resulted in the publication, in prime review journals, of many important guidelines and recommendations regarding standardization of laboratory haematology procedures. Indeed the first prime review publication was in 1965 entitled 'Recommendations and requirements for hemoglobinometry in human blood' (ICSH, 1965) and this subject is still a standardization issue. Since then more than 100 guidelines, reviews or recommendations concerning standardization issues have followed and a complete list of publications is available (hopefully complete) on request from the present Board and shortly at the ICSH website (<http://www.ICSH-web.org> and <http://www.hematologystandards.org>). Although the ICSH originally considered issues in blood transfusion and haemostasis/thrombosis, in the later years these activities have mainly been taken over by the International Societies of Blood Transfusion and Haemostasis/Thrombosis. At that time, the ICSH worked with a variety of international organizations and in particular was affiliated with the WHO and often held expert panel meetings in conjunction with congresses or special conferences, particularly those associated with the International Society of Hematology. Unfortunately with the decline of the International Society of Hematology's meetings in

North America and western Europe and retirement, from active laboratory practice, of the founding committee members, the effectiveness and productivity of ICSH steadily declined by 2000.

Fortunately in the 1990s the global development of the International Society for Laboratory Hematology (ISLH) progressed. One important focus of ISLH was laboratory haematology standardization and in particular they initiated, in conjunction with the ICSH, a working group that formulated international guidelines on a reference method for platelet counting analysis by flow cytometry and the immature reticulocyte fraction (Davis, 1997; ICSH, 2001). Other ISLH consensus documents followed, particularly a consensus rules paper for the examination of blood films (Barnes *et al.*, 2005). Discussions were therefore initiated between the ISLH board and remaining senior members of the old ICSH council between 2002 and 2005.

In April 2007 the ICSH was re-registered as an independent foundation in the Netherlands and as a not-for-profit corporation in the USA. An updated constitution was ratified in April 2007 and a copy is available with the Meetings Secretary which can be had on request or on the ICSH website. The ICSH is directed by a Managing Board, for which a Chairman, Vice Chairmen, Secretaries and a Treasurer were elected and named. The present Managing Board is represented by Samuel J. Machin as Chairman, Josep M. Jou (Barcelona, Spain) as Vice Chairman, Stefanie McFadden (Ohio, USA) as Meetings Secretary, Carol Briggs (London, UK) as Scientific Secretary and Bruce H. Davis (Bangor, Maine, USA) as Treasurer. These officers are elected for 3 years by the Assembly of Council. Board members may only be re-elected for an additional 3 years once. Representative membership of the Council is open to all international or national haematological societies, whom, after they have committed their affiliation, may send representatives to the Board meetings. The Council is also composed of industry representatives made up of corporate sponsors of ICSH, of which there are presently

six members. Each corporate sponsor is asked for a yearly unrestricted financial grant to support the activities of the Council. The corporate representative of each sponsor should be someone of sound scientific standing who can discuss the various aspects of current and future expert panel activities. The Board will meet twice a year in the spring at the annual scientific meeting of the ISLH and in the autumn (fall) at any other convenient venue as determined by the Board. The Assembly, which is an open meeting, will be held in conjunction with the Board meetings as listed above. ISLH have agreed in principle that at every annual scientific meeting, presentations will be given summarizing the ongoing activities of ICSH, within the open Assembly, and input will be solicited from all attendees regarding potential future ICSH projects. If a project is accepted by the Board, an appropriate international expert panel with a lead author/coordinator will be selected with definite time lines for production, agreed financial implications and verification of a final published report.

At present, there are four approved ongoing expert panel activities. These include:

- 1 Preparation of a Guideline for worldwide Point of Care Testing in haematology with special reference to the complete blood count (Clinical Lead – Carol Briggs, London). This guideline is in this issue of the journal.
- 2 The preparation and verification of a new international haemoglobin standard, which is being prepared in conjunction with Eurotrol[®] (Clinical Lead – Bruce Davis, Maine). This standard is now being critically tested at five various international laboratories before being generally released as an international standard.
- 3 Recommendations for Standardization of bone marrow specimens and reports. (Clinical Lead – Szu-Hee Lee, Sydney). The expert panel is now preparing the final version for publication.
- 4 A working panel to prepare an international reference method for an extended white cell differential (Clinical Lead – Brent Wood, Seattle, WA).

In principle it has been agreed that all completed Guidelines/Recommendations which are ICSH publications will be submitted to the ISLH journal, *International Journal of Laboratory Hematology*. After completing the appropriate review process of the Journal it is hoped that the published ICSH documents will continue to play an important role in diagnostic laboratory haematology worldwide. It is also hoped through the increased activities of ICSH that any future standardization project of an international nature in diagnostic laboratory haematology will be considered on application to be a project of ICSH, through the below-listed board members. Assistance for any potential project can always be sought from any of the Board members. Additionally, membership to ICSH is welcome to any corporation or individual with an interest in standardization issues in laboratory haematology.

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