

**Activities of Health Canada's
Science Advisory Board**

**Annual Report to the Minister of Health
2005 – 2006**

Science Advisory Board

The Science Advisory Board (SAB) was established in 1997 to provide strategic advice to the Minister of Health on the quality and relevance of the science performed and used by Health Canada and on other departmental activities from a scientific perspective.

The Board consists of external experts with experience and knowledge relevant to the scientific activities of Health Canada.

The Deputy Minister, Associate Deputy Minister, all Assistant Deputy Ministers, the Executive Director of Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the Chief Scientist, and the President of the Canadian Institutes of Health Research are invited to attend all meetings of the Board in an *ex-officio*, non-voting capacity.

Health Canada Mission

Health Canada is the federal department responsible for helping the people of Canada maintain and improve their health.

Health Canada Vision

Health Canada is committed to improving the lives of all of Canada's people and to making this country's population among the healthiest in the world as measured by longevity, lifestyle and effective use of the public health care system.

Message from the Chair



This report covers an eventful year in which the Science Advisory Board considered a variety of important issues affecting the nature and direction of the scientific activities of Health Canada and devoted increased attention to organizing the Board's deliberations along thematic lines.

I thank the members of the Board for their active and insightful contributions to the Board's deliberations during its regular meetings and on the several other occasions when members were called upon to provide advice on emergent issues.

The Board continued to receive excellent administrative support from the Office of the Chief Scientist and to benefit from the cooperation of the various branches and agencies in Health Canada during the course of its work. The Board is grateful to the Minister and Deputy Minister of Health for their support of and interest in its activities. Details of these activities may be found on our website at:

http://hc-sc.gc.ca/sr-sr/advice-avis/sab-ccs/index_e.html

A handwritten signature in black ink, which appears to read "Arnold Naimark".

Arnold Naimark, SAB Chair

Meet Arnold Naimark OC, OM, MSc; MD; LLD (Mt All; Toronto) FRCP(C), FRSC; FCAHS

Arnold Naimark is President Emeritus, Dean Emeritus, Professor of Medicine and Physiology and Director of the Centre for the Advancement of Medicine at the University of Manitoba. He has served as Chairman or President of the Association of Canadian Medical Colleges (ACMC), the Canadian Society for Clinical Investigation, the Canadian Physiological Society, the Council of Western Canadian University Presidents, the Association of Universities and Colleges of Canada (AUCC) and the Association of Commonwealth Universities (ACU). He is founding chair of the Canadian Health Services Research Foundation and the Canadian Biotechnology Advisory Committee; and serves on the Council of the Canadian Institute for Advanced Research, the National Statistics Council, and several other bodies concerned with higher education, research and development.

Year in Review

Membership Profile

The Board consists of a Chair, a Vice-Chair, and up to 16 members at large, all of whom are external to the federal government and provide their knowledge and expertise on a voluntary basis.

Two rounds of appointments to the Board occurred in 2005 with the Chair and five others being appointed in the Spring and five more in the Fall. In addition, two members' appointments were renewed to maintain continuity.

The Deputy Minister, the Associate Deputy Minister, the Chief Scientist of Health Canada, the Executive Director of the Pest Management Regulatory Agency, the G.D.W. Cameron Visiting Chair, all Assistant Deputy Ministers (ADMs), and the President of the Canadian Institutes for Health Research participate in meetings of the Board in an *ex-officio* non-voting capacity, except for those meetings or parts of meetings held *in camera*.

During 2005-2006, *ex-officio* participation was augmented to include the Health Canada Research Ethics Board Chair, and the Public Health Agency of Canada's Chief Public Health Officer and Chief Scientific Advisor in order to broaden the perspective of the Board's deliberations.

A member of the Board serves as Health Canada's science representative on the Council of Science and Technology Advisors and in 2005-06 a member of the Board serves on the Pest Management Advisory Council.

SAB Membership

Arnold Naimark, Chair
University of Manitoba

Linda Lusby, Vice-Chair
Acadia University

Lorne Babiuk
University of Saskatchewan

Keith Bailey
Retired – Health Canada

Renaldo Battista
University of Montreal

Stephen E. Bornstein
Memorial University

Mark Goldberg
McGill University

Arminée Kazanjian
University of British Columbia

Andreas Laupacis
Institute for Clinical Evaluative
Sciences

Louise Lemieux-Charles
University of Toronto

Christopher Loomis
Memorial University

Renée Lyons
Dalhousie University

Kathryn O’Hara
Carleton University

Howard A. Palley
University of Maryland

Rémi Quirion
Douglas Hospital Research
Centre

Jacques R. Simard
University of Laval

Stanley Vollant
Clinique médicale du Fjord

Mamoru Watanabe
University of Calgary

Strategic Planning

In August 2005, the Board held a special meeting to review its *modus operandi* with a view to refining its mandate and to organizing its work along strategic themes. Senior departmental officials identified the science and technology (S&T) priorities, challenges and opportunities within their respective branches and the potential role of the Board in providing useful input.

The most significant modifications to the *modus-operandi* of the SAB included the:

- identification of four thematic areas:
 - environment and health;
 - regulation of therapeutics, diagnostics and natural health products;
 - public health (including needs of special populations); and
 - science, technology, innovation.
- augmentation of the *ex-officio* membership; and
- promotion of synergy between the Board and bodies advisory to other departments.

The designation of the four theme areas was seen as conducive to the development of a longer-term program of deliberations and to monitoring of emerging trends and issues. The latter function was enhanced by the development of a new “issues-tracking” process.

Expansion of its *ex-officio* membership was seen as providing the Board with an opportunity to more fully engage with external experts, thereby increasing knowledge transfer and ultimately reducing duplication of effort. This modification was incorporated into the revised Terms of Reference for the Board.

Synergy

During 2005-06, the Board focussed its energy on further engaging the Department, the Public Health Agency of Canada and external organizations that influence health and health research. The SAB views its effectiveness as being linked to how well it can integrate key departmental priorities, with an external perspective, to give practical advice to the Minister. As an example, the link with the Science Advisory Board at Environment Canada was complemented by the formation of a sub-committee between the Science Advisory Boards of Agriculture and Agri-Food Canada and Health Canada. Interactions with Industry Canada were initiated to explore issues related to science and innovation generally and with the Council of Canadian Academies.

The Board's ability to engage senior departmental officials was enhanced by the creation of Health Canada's DEC-Science (Departmental Executive Committee's Subcommittee on Science). This new forum will strengthen communication between the Board and the Department's branches and agencies by facilitating the diffusion of the Board's analyses and advice.

Each year, Health Canada hosts a science forum at which its science is showcased. In 2005, the theme of the Forum was *Science in Support of Health Policies and Regulations*. The event attracted over 500 departmental researchers, scientists and senior officials to its plenary, concurrent and poster sessions. These sessions provided an opportunity for knowledge translation and the potential for creating linkages and networks for future collaboration. Board members participated in this event and hosted a reception to engage scientists and senior departmental executives on an informal basis.

SAB Participants: 2005 Health Canada Science Forum

- **L. Babiuk** – Distinguished Chief Scientist Guest Lecturer, *Co-evolution of an Institute and a Career*
- **K. O'Hara** – Moderator/Chair, *The Challenges of Communicating Science to the Public*
- **A. Naimark** – Speaker, *Risk in the Health Sector: A Holistic View*
- **R. Battista** – Speaker, *Apogée.net: A Knowledge Network in Support of Policy and Regulation for the New Genetics*

Meetings

During 2005-2006, the Board's meetings and teleconferences included presentations and discussions on a wide range of topics e.g.:

- children's health;
- guidelines on radon levels;
- aboriginal health;
- Canadian Strategy for Cancer Control;
- marketed health products;
- science and technology – including innovation;
- mental health;
- oral health;
- access to special drugs; as well as
- interfaces with other departments and organizations.

The meetings often involved participation by experts from other departments and from outside government who were invited by the Board to discuss particular topics and developments.

In addition, the Board received updates and briefings on various developments that were either the subject of advice tendered in earlier years or were seen as emerging issues of relevance to the Board's mandate.

Following each meeting, the Board published a summary of the proceedings and submitted confidential advice to the Minister of Health on selected topics.

For more detailed descriptions of the Board's activities, see the Health Canada website for the SAB at:

http://hc-sc.gc.ca/sr-sr/advice-avis/sab-ccs/index_e.html

<p><i>Retreat</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• August 30-31, 2005 <p><i>Meetings</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• October 24, 2005• December 6-7, 2005• February 28-March 1, 2006• May 9-10, 2006 <p><i>Teleconferences</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• October 5, 2005• November 16, 2005 <p><i>Reception with HC Scientists</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• October 24, 2005
--

Financial

The Office of the Chief Scientist (OCS), with support from branches, funds the operation of the Board. The budget is managed by the SAB Secretariat, located in the OCS. The OCS is responsible for all expenses related to SAB meetings including travel, accommodation and related expenses incurred by SAB members in attending meetings, in accordance with Treasury Board guidelines.

Main expenditures of the Board include:

- Transportation and Communication;
- Professional and Special Services (including translation);
- Information Services; and
- Material and Supplies.

Conclusion

In 2005-2006, the Board reorganized its *modus operandi*, moved its deliberations to a more strategic level, expanded its liaison with other advisory bodies in order to assess issues that cut across departmental lines, and increased its attention to developments that influence the context in which the scientific enterprise in Health Canada must function.

These initiatives will continue to be pursued in 2006-2007. In addition, the Board plans to undertake a fundamental review of its mandate, in relation to the planning efforts underway in Health Canada and in other components of the Health Portfolio. In planning its own program of work, the Board will also take into account new general initiatives of the federal government that are likely to have important implications for the Health Portfolio.