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Alcor News Bulletin

Number 18: November 2nd, 2003
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Editorship

With this issue Tanya Jones [TJ] and Mike Perry [MP] are taking over primary responsibility for writing and mailing this newsletter. From the attributions it will be seen that Tanya, who is now Alcor's Chief Operating Officer, has contributed most of the material this time. Mike meanwhile is also trying to familiarize himself with some details of production, including the mechanics of emailing the newsletter and making sure anyone who recently subscribed is in fact getting it. (This contributed to a slight delay in getting out this issue.) Hopefully any bugs can be corrected very soon. [MP]

On OSHA Compliance

The Occupational Safety and Health Administration's (OSHA) mission is to "save lives, prevent injuries and protect the health of America's workers." Like nearly every other business in the land, Alcor falls under its jurisdiction. Fines for non-compliance are severe, ranging from \$7,000 to \$70,000 per infraction; but their regulations are sufficiently complex that outside aid in determining compliance is often advisable. Since OSHA offers assistance, in the form of knowledgeable consultants to evaluate an organization's healthfulness, we invited a pair of inspectors to our facility for a tour. These consultants reported their recommendations for correcting identified hazards.

A management commitment to a safe working environment was simply the first step in what is becoming a large body of documentation on hazard assessment, engineering and work practice controls, and methods for reporting work-related illnesses or injury. Our walk through the site uncovered four specific OSHA violations: the need to install fall protection on a skylight used when hoisting whole-body patients into their dewars and on an overhead storage area; an exit was locked and unlabeled; we need to implement a lockout/tagout program for shop equipment and conduct personal protective equipment certification.

Alcor management has clearly declared its commitment to safe and healthful working conditions for all employees in every phase of cryonics, but a written program was considered to be more beneficial. This documentation is now page one of our new manual.

We have begun implementation of formal training concerning staff responsibilities and how they relate to job safety. The first training session occurred October 30. We have begun documenting potential hazards, which will be included in new employee orientations. Additionally, we were directed to create an administrative plan that includes both disciplinary actions (from warnings both verbal and written through termination criteria) for those employees failing to comply with safety procedures, and reward programs for those who excel at compliance.

We were deemed to have no "Imminent Dangers," the most serious classification of hazards, but each of the four violations listed were considered to be "serious," the second highest order of risk. All of the violations have already been corrected, but we can look forward to periodic reassessment when facility and procedural needs change.

That we have completed this safety survey does not mean we will be subjected to an OSHA inspection, but it does mean that we will be better prepared if we do. It also means that our understanding of the risks involved in performing cryonic suspensions is greater, and these potential hazards will be communicable to staff and volunteers -- something that should make this a safer environment for us all. [TJ]

Transport Training Completed

Last weekend (Oct. 25-26), fifteen students, three visiting doctors and one nurse, and several instructors gathered at the Creekside Resort in Mayer, Arizona to attend a transport procedure orientation. Two days is not enough to share everything that should be known by those participating in transports prior to deployment, but everyone rose to the challenge and worked hard to assimilate the large volume of information. The pace of exchange was quick, and there was a fair amount of hands-on practice.

Topics included: the legal status of cryonics; negotiation tactics for dealing with hospitals, mortuaries, and medical examiners; safety precautions, cooling, cardiopulmonary support, and the latest in cell-stabilizing medications; and

washout protocol. Students practiced calculating and drawing medications, airway placement, assembling the ice bath and squid systems, placing a peripheral IV, and setting up the perfusion system for remote washouts.

Special thanks go to Paula Lemler, for the extraordinary effort she put into organizing this training session. The lack of logistical complaints was unprecedented, and we all appreciated her hard work. Thanks, Paula!

The next training class is being scheduled for March 2004, and will be both longer and more comprehensive than this one. Anyone interested in attending the March class should contact Tanya Jones) about being added to the mailing list. [TJ]

Visitors

Paula Lemler's role in organizing the training session additionally included conducting tours at Alcor's facility and otherwise interfacing with the attendees. Among these were a delegation sent at the behest of a wealthy member to evaluate Alcor's medical procedures and computer system. According to Alcor CEO Dr. Jerry Lemler, a formal proposal will be submitted for improving our information technology. More information should be available at a later date. [MP]

Standby Appears Imminent

Six months ago an Alcor member with a terminal illness relocated from Utah to a Scottsdale hospice to be near Alcor's facility should the need arise. Recently his medical condition worsened and he is now under 24-hour attendance by hospice personnel. A standby and cryopreservation may occur any day now. [MP]

Facility Renovation

Sledgehammers abound as facility renovations have begun to give us an expanded operating room, new lab space, and a larger patient care bay. For more than a week, contractors have been moving equipment, tearing out walls and building new ones, and redoing the electrical wiring and ducting to accommodate our new anticipated load. Currently, renovations are proceeding nicely, and at a pace that places us ten days ahead of schedule.

Once the renovations are complete, we'll have space to perform simultaneous suspensions, something which has been lacking up to now. The new patient care bay will also have significantly more room for dewars, accommodating around 150 patients.

While we're already looking forward to the end of dust and debris, the end result should very much be worth it. [TJ]

Media Attention

Cryonics often gets an unsympathetic workup in the media, something we have to expect for a number of reasons. (1)It hasn't been shown to work. (2)It's about death and the procedures are upsetting to many people. (3)It takes some scientific sophistication to really understand, thus is easily misunderstood. (4)The cryonics premise would have explosive implications if true - we'd have to consider burials and cremations homicides, for instance, and face the prospect that many lives of loved ones were lost and are still being lost unnecessarily. (5)As a consequence, people will tend to be attracted by the perceived morbidity of cryonics (the "Halloween" effect) but at the same time be strongly resistant to taking it seriously at the personal level. (6)Media people do their thing to make a living, which means they will be tempted to present what they sense their audience wants to believe rather than the most objective assessment possible. (In this case it is also very likely what the media people themselves want to believe, for the reasons given.)

The above list is not exhaustive or definitive, but should help us understand why cryonics often gets a public drubbing (as well as why there are so few signups, relatively speaking). Sometimes the reports are more favorable, though, as in a recent article by Kerry Fehr-Snyder in the Arizona Republic; see <http://www.azcentral.com/news/articles/1020alcor-science.html>. This is not the first such article; others are listed at Ralph Merkle's website, <http://www.merkle.com/cryo/#news>. [MP]

Alcor Central Meetings

Alcor's final two meetings of the year will be held on Saturday, November 8 and Saturday, December 13, both at 11am MST (10am PST, noon CST, 1pm EST). Alcor meetings are now held in the new conference room at the facility's location in Scottsdale. [MP]

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 End of Alcor News bulletin #18 dated November 2nd, 2003.
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