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SENN2015 OPENS UP DIALOGUE ON NANOSAFETY

The 2nd International Congress on Safety of Engineered Nanoparticles and Nanotechnologies — SENN2015 — will take place on 12-15th April 2015. Hosted by the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, it is Europe's foremost gathering of experts in the field of nanosafety. It aims to promote nanosafety by improving the understanding of the biological basis of the potential risks of nanomaterials.

SENN2015 will include talks on: nanomaterial identification and classification; exposure, transformation and life cycle; hazard mechanisms; and risk assessment and management. With the conference now just around the corner, Professor Kai Savolainen, Director of the Nanosafety Research Centre at the Finnish Institute of Occupational Health is looking forward to the communication opportunities that the meeting will afford.

“One of the main goals of SENN2015 is to keep the dialogue on nanomaterials and nanotechnology alive and current,” says Savolainen. “We want to emphasise any new trends or developments in the field, both in terms of the development of new materials and in terms of improved understanding of hazards and exposure to these materials.”

Engineered nanomaterials (ENM) are likely to provide the basis for some fascinating technological advances in the coming years, which is why it is so critical that nanosafety is incorporated now so that potential health and environmental concerns are allayed and innovation isn't hindered.

“When we talk about risk of a given material, there is a simple equation that we go by: risk = hazard x exposure,” explains Savolainen. “Thus, if we can reduce hazard down to near zero, then the risk can never be that high. Alternatively, if we can ensure that exposure is close to zero then risk is also largely avoided. Of course, it is not usually that easy to do either of these things, so we keep working on both sides of the equation.”

Managing the risk of nanomaterials throughout the production process and other steps of the life cycle is essential in order to maintain the highest standards of safety and understanding of exposure risks. “In industrial processes, it is often easy to use clean spaces for production to prevent exposure. But in addition to the occupational environment, you have all the other steps in the life cycle of ENM where you can have exposure, not just to workers but also consumers.

“On top of that you can have exposure increased by nanomaterials in air, soil and water, so it is important to understand processes that may lead to release of materials, either into the human food chain and other areas that can lead to human exposure, or into the environment. So in SENN2015 we also cover these life-cycle issues to see how we can manage the potential hazards and risks that are associated with production and use of ENM from an environmental point of view.”

Another special emphasis of the SENN2015 programme will be on the new and more thorough understanding of ENM that is emerging and how this can be associated with toxicity prediction. André Nel of UCLA will provide the keynote speech in this area.

In the past, research excellence has been judged purely on discovery and scientific innovation. However, the Horizon2020 funding scheme has brought in a new set of values in addition to the more traditional ones, as Savolainen explains: “The EC and the member states have made it apparent that projects must make an effort to collaborate with industry and think about their impact on society – are they helping to improve European competitiveness, are they helping to improve wellbeing, and are they helping to provide more employment?”

“These new economic and societal dimensions are new for many scientists, and it is a challenge to learn how to collaborate with industrial partners and create a win-win situation. It will not be easy for either side, but the ones that learn to do this quickest will be the ones that succeed. This is something that we should all bare in mind when we get together in April.”

[For more information click here](#)

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