

REPORTS



Medichem Occupational Health in the Chemical Industry

XXII MEDICHEM MELBOURNE, AUSTRALIA, Oct. 18th-21st, 1994

Nearly 150 physicians and other professionals specialising in health protection in the chemical industry assembled in Melbourne, Oct. 18th-21st, 1994. Drawn from 16 countries, the delegates heard presentations by key-note speakers and nearly 40 papers by participants.

Richard Warburton, CEO of Dupont Australia and Chairman of the National Occupational Health and Safety Commission spoke at the opening of the Congress. He stressed the importance of the health of the workers in the chemical industry, the safety of the communities around manufacturing facilities and the consumer buying end-products and praised the work done by Medichem in original research as well as in the exchange of ideas and knowledge afforded by the Congress.

On behalf of the delegats, *Professor Alfred Thiess*, founder and Honorary President of Medichem thanked the city and people of Melbourne for the warmth of their welcome and anticipated a highly successful Congress in an outstanding venue. He underlined the important role Medichem has played since its foundation in 1972 for the chemical industry in terms of assessing, reducing, and communicating risks related to exposures of workers and the general public.

Papers covered progress in protection of health of workers and the health of consumers and of communities living near chemical plants. State-of-the-art papers were presented on occupational skin disease, occupational lung disease and on the problem of occupational exposure standards for abnormal work shift patterns.

A major topic was biological effects of low level exposures which covered community exposures such as air pollution. The practical importance of some low level exposure has been exaggerated in recent times and the magnitude of these risks is now being re-evaluated.

Experts, including *Dr. Frank Rose* of ICI in his brilliant, presentation, stressed the importance of credible information for the community so that a balanced view of the risks can be formed. The chemical industry in general still has a lot to learn from past mistakes in communicating with the public and the press.

The Congress was a great success scientifically as well as socially, giving participants ample opportunity for discussion and exchange of views in a warm and welcoming atmosphere. The proceedings of this XXII Medichem Congress will be published by WHO. Medichem holds its next Congress at MIT in Boston Sept. 18–22, 1995.

