# THE ROLE OF THE ACADEME AND PROFESSIONAL SCIENTIFIC ORGANIZATIONS IN PROMOTING THE STRATEGIC APPROACH TO THE SOUND MANAGEMENT OF CHEMICALS

Irma R. Makalinao MD FPSCOT DPPS
Professor of Pharmacology and Toxicology, College of Medicine
University of the Philippines Manila
President, Philippine Society of Clinical and Occupational Toxicology

## Poison Control Center's and Asia's need for toxicology education to support the sound management of chemicals

During the initial round of consultations for the strategic approach to international chemicals management (SAICM), the Asia Pacific Association of Medical Toxicology (APAMT) participated officially as a science NGO organization including the deliberations in the expanded bureau and the ICCM in Dubai. The strength of APAMT as a scientific organization for chemicals management is drawn from it nearly 20 years history of providing sound treatment approaches to patients exposed and poisoned by chemicals to its more proactive role in toxicovigilance and poison prevention. As an organization of poison control centers it has participated in capacity building for chemicals management within the Asia Pacific Region as consultants for intergovernmental organizations such as the World Health Organization in the creation of poison information monographs for the International Program on Chemical Safety, a multilevel multimedia training CD on the sound management of pesticide use, children's environmental health and chemical emergencies and disaster preparedness to name a few. As an organization through the technical expertise of its members, it has supported WHO in the strengthening, creation and setting up of poison centers knowledgeable on the issue of the sound management of chemical and pharmaceutical use. APAMT through its members and scientific meetings addresses key issues related to decreasing the adverse effects of chemicals by providing information, conducting scientific researches and capacity building on areas related to pesticides, heavy metals, human risk assessment and environmental toxicology. APAMT through its members within the Asia Pacific Region can provide a very important resource pool for information sharing and capacity building during the implementation phase of the strategic approach to international chemicals management. The actual experiences of the poison centers from the developing countries within the Asia Pacific region on how chemicals can adversely affect human health provide very good case studies to build the strategic approach to chemicals management At the same time, one can look at how poison centers have stepped out of their traditional role of treating acute poisoning towards a more proactive role in prevention of chemical poisoning through education and capacity building of relevant stakeholders.

**The Academe (through the University of the Philippines) and the Philippine Society of Clinical and Occupational Toxicology, Inc and their role in the Interagency Committee on Environmental Health: A Case Study for SAICM implementation in the Philippines**

There exists in the Philippines an Interagency Committee on Environmental Health (IACEH) composed of the following line agencies of government namely: the Department of Health, Department of Environment and Natural Resources, Department of Agriculture, Department of Interior and Local Government, Department of Education, Department of Trade and Industry, Bureau of Customs together with the academe (University of the Philippines), professional scientific non-governmental organizations (Philippine Society of Clinical and Occupational Toxicology) and as the need arises public interest non-governmental organizations like the Pesticide Action Network of the Philippines. The IACEH by it multistakeholder nature provides for mechanisms to address the issue of international chemicals management in a very holistic and strategic manner. Through the mandate provided for by the line agencies of government represented in the IACEH it has successfully addressed specific issues related to heavy metals in mining and geothermal plant operations, marine poisoning, pesticides poisoning and trade of banned pesticides to name a few. In this regard, one can not undermine the contribution of the academe and the professional societies like PSCOT in providing technical advice to the IACEH. The academe and PSCOT has played a critical role in assisting the government as experts in the science of toxicology. In this way, both the academe and PSCOT has participated in training and capacity building with respect to the whole life cycle of chemicals, conducted health impact assessment of metals in mining and geothermal plant operations, pesticide use and hazardous material emergency response. For example, both the University of the Philippines and the PSCOT have actively assisted the Philippine government in mass poisoning among children in Bohol who ate cassava contaminated with pesticides and currently the mercury spill in a school that resulted in poisoning among some of the children exposed to mercury vapor. Both are supporting the government in its implementation of the globally harmonized system of labeling (GHS). The academe and PSCOT have provided a mechanism for information sharing, capacity building for different sectors of society in addressing issues like pesticide use, metals, children's environmental health, and modern health hazards linked to chemicals (endocrine disruptions, increase in asthma, cancer and learning disabilities in children) and environmental toxicology. In all these, the academe and the professional toxicology organization can provide service, training, research and a scientific framework from which the government can draw guidance in its resolutions to address the need to protect both health and environment in an ecosystems approach while allowing the increased use and influx of chemicals in the country as it moves towards industrialization and sustainable development.