

Subject: FNCA Project Activities in 2020

July 1st, 2020

Dear FNCA Coordinators,

The novel coronavirus outbreak (COVID-19) has turned into a global pandemic, resulting in tens of thousands of infections and thousands of deaths worldwide.

In addition, the coronavirus pandemic has wreaked immense damage to research institutes, such as shuttering of laboratories, aborting field research, prohibition of large gatherings, including lab meetings and lectures. Many institutions are still trying to figure out how and whether to test employees for SARS-CoV-2, and what to do if infections resurge. Neither can they start new projects nor do they want to start projects that cannot be stopped on short notice again.

With regard to FNCA projects, stay-at-home and public safety orders preclude research in many projects, and the pandemic has delayed scheduled research, especially for projects with international collaboration involving movement of people or field work.

FNCA has held project meetings in each member state so far. Originally, seven project meetings were planned to be held in six member countries during 2020. However, because of the coronavirus pandemic, many member countries, including Japan, have been imposing international travel restrictions, such as denial of permission to enter or a two-week quarantine at a designated location. Though in some countries the first wave of the outbreak has come to an end, almost all infectious disease specialists predict that the second wave of the outbreak will happen this autumn or winter, and many countries will not lift the international travel restrictions in fear of the second outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic.

Under these circumstances, in 2020, we will be unable to hold the customary formal FNCA project meetings (workshops), in each member state. Instead we would like to hold online meetings, using e-mails or video conferencing, mainly focusing on information exchange.

Usually each FNCA project has been carried out as a three-year project. 2020 is the final year for the projects "Radiation Processing and Polymer Modification" and

“Research on Climate Change,” and the intermediate review year for the “Mutation Breeding” project, however, we would like to extend these three projects by one year. We had originally planned to start new phases for the other four projects, however, we would like to hold online meetings this year in preparation to start them in 2021. New project proposals will be discussed in the next Coordinators Meeting to be held in March next year.

I have held discussions with the project leaders who lead each project, and the schedules planned currently are as follows:

1. “Mutation Breeding” project

Online meetings using e-mails will be held from October to November, focusing mainly on the country research status and discussions on them. Dr. Hase, QST (The National Institutes for Quantum and Radiological Science and Technology), will soon contact the FNCA project leaders in each country.

2. “Radiation Processing and Polymer Modification” project

An online video meeting is planned to be held in October, focusing on information exchange. Dr. Tamada, QST, will contact the FNCA project leaders in each country.

3. “Research on Climate Change” project

A video meeting is planned to be held in August to discuss the progress, roadblocks, and international collaborations (and possible delays). Prof. Heijnis, ANSTO, will soon contact the FNCA project leaders in each country.

4. “Radiation Oncology” project

Clinical data on cervical, nasopharyngeal, and breast cancer will be collected by Japanese doctors by the end of July. The collected data will be analyzed by the end of October, and a video meeting will be held at the end of November.

These activities will be conducted under the supervision of Dr. Kato, Saitama Medical University.

5. “Research Reactor Utilization” project

An online meeting will be held in December, using either e-mails or video conferencing, focusing on the new radio isotope production and NAA of environmental samples. Prof. Ohtsuki, Kyoto University, and Prof. Ebihara, Waseda University, will contact the FNCA project leaders in each country, and lead the discussion.

6. “Radiation Safety and Radioactive Waste Management” project

An online meeting will be held over e-mail in October, based on the country report on NORM/TENORM and the management of used radio isotopes. Prof. Kosako,

Tokyo University, will soon contact the FNCA project leaders in each country.

7. “Nuclear Security and Safeguards” project

A web meeting is planned to be held between January and March 2021, focusing on the country report on nuclear security, especially for nuclear forensics, and safeguards. Dr. Naoi, JAEA, who is the new project leader in Japan, will contact the FNCA project leaders in each country.

Due to the coronavirus outbreak, I think we have no choice but to conduct our project meetings in this way in 2020. We hope to hold formal project meetings of the FNCA in each member country next year.

If you have any problems or concerns about the schedules mentioned above, please inform me by July 15th.

I strongly hope the Coordinators Meeting can be held in March next year in Tokyo and I look forward to seeing you again.

Best Regards,

Tomoaki WADA
FNCA Coordinator of Japan
Minatojima-Nakamachi 7-7-6, Chuo-ku
650-0046, Kobe, Japan
tomwada@sta.nir.jp