1610b ‘WORKPLACE HEALTH WITHOUT BORDERS’ – BUILDING CAPACITY IN THE REDUCTION OF EXPOSURE TO RESPIRABLE CRYSSTALLINE SILICA (RCS)

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Introduction Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB, www.whwb.org) is an international non-profit organisation founded in 2011 with the main objective of addressing the limited expertise that exists globally for the prevention of workplace disease and injury. Membership is voluntary and comprises professionals across various disciplines within occupational health, the most prominent being occupational hygiene. The WHWB international organisation is based in Canada, with several branches across the world, e.g. WHWB-USA and WHWB-UK.

Methods Through its established and growing network of professionals who volunteer their time and expertise, WHWB is able to offer capacity building in the broad occupational health field, through collaborations that benefit under-served populations and vulnerable workforces across the globe. To date, the WHWB activities have focussed primarily on training, mentoring, development and translation of guidance materials, and technical assistance to build knowledge and capacity in occupational health and hygiene.

Results Gaps and needs in terms of occupational health and hygiene capacity building are identified, mostly in developing countries, through various means. Honouring the requests received involves liaison with organisations associated with the protection of workforces (e.g. government, educational, private enterprises, and tripartite representatives) in the respective countries; the establishment of WHWB in-country projects to best deliver on the type of interventions requested; and the design of good-fit, sustainable programmes that address the needs of the target workforces, across sectors.

Discussion Already in partnerships or working collaborations with organisations such as OHTA and AIHA, WHWB is seeking to expand its collaboration partners, to improve its offerings and footprint in terms of capacity building in occupational health. To this end, opportunities are being explored for partnerships with e.g. ICOH and WHO. This presentation will showcase some of the successes and challenges faced by WHWB intervention projects and training endeavours, and be a platform for discussion around innovative ways for establishing and strengthening collaboration networks.