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Third edition



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### Foreword

The World Health Organization (WHO) has long recognized that safety and, in particular, biological safety are important international issues. WHO published the first edition of the *Laboratory biosafety manual* in 1983. The manual encouraged countries to accept and implement basic concepts in biological safety and to develop national codes of practice for the safe handling of pathogenic microorganisms in laboratories within their geographical borders. Since 1983, many countries have used the expert guidance provided in the manual to develop such codes of practice. A second edition of the manual was published in 1993.

WHO continues to provide international leadership in biosafety through this third edition of the manual by addressing biological safety and security issues facing us in the current millennium. The third edition stresses throughout the importance of personal responsibility. New chapters have been added on risk assessment, safe use of recombinant DNA technology and transport of infectious materials. Recent world events have revealed new threats to public health through deliberate misuse and release of microbiological agents and toxins. The third edition therefore also introduces biosecurity concepts – the protection of microbiological assets from theft, loss or diversion, which could lead to the inappropriate use of these agents to cause public health harm. This edition also includes safety information from the 1997 WHO publication *Safety in health-care laboratories* (1).

The third edition of the WHO *Laboratory biosafety manual* is a helpful reference and guide to nations that accept the challenge to develop and establish national codes of practice for securing microbiological assets, yet ensuring their availability for clinical, research and epidemiological purposes.

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