

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

115th meeting, Tuesday 22nd November 2016
Skipton House, London

Present

Chairman: Dr Chris Gibson

Members: Dr Paul Darragh
Professor John Harrison
Professor Brenda Howard
Professor Ray Kemp
Professor Stephanie McKeown
Dr Colin Martin
Dr Tom Nunan
Professor Mark Pearce
Professor Paul Pharoah
Professor Kevin Prise
Dr Peter Riley
Dr Mireille Toledano
Professor Richard Wakeford
Ms Helen Warner
Professor Peter Warwick

Assessors: BEIS
DH
EA
FSA
HSE
NDA
PHE
SEPA

Secretariat: Dr Simon Mann (PHE)
Dr Emma Petty (PHE)
Ms Kim Stonell (PHE)

115TH COMARE MEETING

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 115th meeting and welcomed members. He advised members of the private nature of the meeting and that papers should remain confidential. Members were asked to declare any interests during the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed Ms Helen Warner and Professor Ray Kemp, who have joined the committee as lay members. He also welcomed the substitute assessors for FSA, SEPA and HSE and the observer from BEIS.

The Chairman advised members that Professor Peter Marsden completed his term of office with COMARE at the end of September and thanked Professor Marsden for his work on the committee.

The Chairman also advised members that this would be the current DH assessor's last meeting. He thanked the assessor for his work with the committee over the last 11 years.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Jane Barrett, Dr Frank de Vocht, Dr David Sutton and Professor Roger Taylor. Apologies had also been received from the assessors for SEPA, FSA, FSS, HSE, DoH NI, MoD, SG, WG and DCLG. The Chairman requested that assessors ensure representatives are present at the meetings to comment on items relevant to them.

ITEM 1 Minutes of the 114th meeting

1.1 The minutes were accepted as an accurate record of the meeting.

ITEM 2 Matters arising

i) COMARE membership

a. Lay membership

2.1 The Chairman reminded members that vacancies for two lay members were advertised during the summer. The DH assessor introduced Professor Ray Kemp and Ms Helen Warner to the committee and brief biographies were given.

ii) COMARE matters

a. Database access and cancer registry data transfer

2.2 The Chairman reminded members of previous discussions around cancer registries and database access, and drew members' attention to the recommendation in the 17th COMARE report about collaboration for consistent access arrangements around the UK.

2.3 The PHE assessor advised members that PHE was actively working with colleagues in Wales and Scotland to ensure harmonisation of data. Updates would be provided as and when available. The Chairman would request an update from Northern Ireland for the next meeting.

[ACTION: The Chairman / DoH NI]

b. Authorship requests for work associated with reports

2.4 The Chairman reminded members that he had previously raised the issue of the right of authorship with the lead DH assessor and the CSA. The Chairman cited the CSA's response to the issue. Members agreed this was fair and colleagues in the cancer registry should be engaged in the process accordingly.

- 2.5 The lead DH assessor also clarified that the COMARE reports are those of the committee as a body, rather than of individuals. Members may be acknowledged individually where appropriate.
- 2.6 Professor Wakeford advised members of a possible proposal for a summary paper on the 17th report. The Chairman suggested liaising with the authors to determine plans.

[ACTION: The Chairman / Secretariat]

c. **DH Liaison arrangements**

- 2.7 The lead DH assessor echoed the Chairman's thanks to the DH assessor for his support to the committee. The assessor advised members that DH is losing a significant number of staff and is moving away from having dedicated subject experts. The lead assessor will continue as sponsor of the committee; however, there will be a greater role for PHE, as a specialised expert organisation, to provide in-depth day to day support. Members were advised that there were separate managerial lines for the secretariat provided by PHE and for PHE's advisory and support role to DH for the committee. The Chairman acknowledged the pressure around resources, but noted the importance of the assessors' role and attendance at committee meetings.

d. **Thyroid research proposal**

- 2.8 The Chairman drew members' attention to Recommendation 3 of the 17th report and advised members that an initial project proposal for the Thyroid birth cohort study has been submitted to DH R&D. The DH assessor added that it was felt that the thyroid cancer project was a very important study and the research proposal is progressing through the process. Members welcomed the news.

ITEM 3 Working group reports:

i) **Contaminations Working Group**

- 3.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the beach particles updates received by CWG since the last meeting. He noted that a meeting of the CWG took place yesterday.

Sellafield

- 3.2 The EA assessor provided a brief history of the programme for the benefit of new members. The total number of finds so far is ~2,700 in 1,800 ha monitored across beaches from Drigg up to St Bees. PHE has produced two risk assessments and an update to these will be carried out next year. The risk is very low in terms of probability of encounter, but the doses from ingestion and skin contact may not be trivial. The investigative elements of the programme will be closed around 2018 and a routine monitoring programme only will be put in place. A work plan has been developed and this has been shared with the CWG.
- 3.3 An update was given on the investigative work for the Moorside power station. The CWG received an update on unusual Sr-90 particle. A geomorphology study being undertaken by Sellafield Ltd and the stability of the dunes was also reviewed. The draft intervention plan was shared with the CWG.
- 3.4 Members discussed the risk assessment in terms of the probability of encounter and for the risk of harm that might result. The find per hectare and area monitored data was also discussed. It was noted that there had been some queries at the CWG meeting as to how areas were defined. The Chairman advised members that the Sellafield Ltd annual monitoring report was available on the Sellafield Ltd website.

Dounreay

- 3.5 The SEPA assessor reminded members that DSRL has been required to undertake monitoring around Dounreay for a number of years and provided an update of the 2016 finds to date. The Particles Recovery

Advisory Group (PRAG(D)) has reviewed all the data for both on and offshore monitoring. The current access to Sandside Beach was also discussed.

Dalgety Bay

3.6 The SEPA assessor confirmed that the routine monitoring undertaken by the MoD's contractor continues. There was no update on find rates. Public protection measures, such as signage etc., continue and long term remediation works are being developed by MoD.

3.7 SEPA's check monitoring of sentinel areas and mussel beds has been undertaken in the past 6 weeks and no particles were found. SEPA is also investigating changes in the coastline due to sediment transport and coastal erosion. CWG members have requested an update on the remediation works for the next meeting and the Chairman has been actioned to ask the MoD to provide an update.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

3.8 The Chairman advised members that BEIS had invited COMARE to a workshop on implementation of certain aspects of the Basic Safety Standards Directive and that he had attended the morning session. Members discussed the identification of contaminated land and the implementation of the directive. The committee were advised that final proposals on the directive were likely to go out for consultation around March 2017. The Chairman suggested that the committee would consider responding this consultation when it is opened.

[ACTION: COMARE]

3.9 Members highlighted the Sniffer funded work for dealing with communities where clean-up is required. The Chairman agreed that the Sniffer guidance would be circulated for the next meeting.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

3.10 The DH assessor updated members on the implementation of the BSS directive in relation to medical exposures.

Authorisation Working Group

3.11 The Chairman noted that the AWG has not considered any further consultations since the last meeting.

ITEM 4 COMARE publications:

i) COMARE – 17th Report – Sellafield & Dounreay Review

4.1 The Chairman advised members that the 17th report was published on 30th September 2016 with a press launch at the Science Media Centre. He summarised the media response to the publication. Professor Pearce thanked all contributors to the report, including Professor Elliot who attended the site stakeholder meeting and press launch.

4.2 The Chairman took members through the DH's responses to the report's recommendations on how these may be taken forward.

4.3 For Recommendation 8 Dr Toledano suggested that, depending on the resource required, it might be something that could be done through the rapid enquiry facility of SAHSU. Dr Toledano would discuss this further with PHE.

[ACTION: Dr Toledano]

4.4 Members discussed the opt-out issue for cancer registrations associated with Recommendation 9. It was suggested that it would be useful for patient records to indicate that they have opted out so that researchers are aware of how many have opted out within a cohort. The PHE assessor would take this back.

[ACTION: PHE]

4.5 The Chairman suggested that patients should understand the implications for future studies of this type. He would endeavour to find out what information is provided to patients and encourage more information being made available.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

4.6 The NDA assessor summarised the NDA's response for Recommendation 6 of the 17th report, which concluded that using an iodine release fraction of 10% was a reasonable precautionary upper bound for estimating discharges. It was felt that further work on environmental measurements of I-129 in tree rings would not significantly reduce the uncertainties in the current estimates. Members referred to the quoted BNFL report and suggested that this report be made available to the committee.

[ACTION: NDA]

4.7 Members discussed the NDA's response. The Chairman acknowledged the response and stated that it was clear NDA have considered environmental measurements, but suggested that this could be considered further.

4.8 The Chairman informed members that the CWG discussed the summary of work by PHE on Po-210 discharges. It was felt it would be useful to have more detailed scientific analysis of the information included in the 17th report and that this information could be considered for a peer-reviewed publication.

[ACTION: PHE]

4.9 Professor Wakeford advised members that the publication on the thyroid cancer study has been accepted and would appear in the December issue of the Journal of Radiological Protection. Professor Pearce advised members that that publication on the population mixing study has not yet been accepted for publication.

4.10 The Chairman drew members' attention to a recent letter received by some members of the committee. The letter states that certain papers had not been taken into account in COMARE's 17th report. Members discussed the letter and the Chairman requested that members do not respond individually. He requested that Professor Pearce, as Chair of the subcommittee, review the references to look at any scientific merit in the challenge. The Chairman would seek advice through DH on certain statements in the letter and would respond on behalf the committee with a scientific response and the appropriate legal phraseology.

[ACTION: Professor Pearce]

[ACTION: The Chairman]

4.11 The Chairman cited the advice to SACs provided by Go-Science with regard to indemnity and would request further clarity.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress:

5.1 The Chairman suggested that the 18th report would become the review of DXA scanning issues and the 19th report would become the Interventional Radiology review.

i) COMARE – 18th Report – DXA scanning issues

5.2 Dr Martin reminded members that the report relates to the use of DXA scanning on sports people to assess their body composition. The members of the subcommittee have been finalised and the first meeting has been arranged for Friday 25th November 2016 to agree the scope and timetable.

5.3 Professor Kemp volunteered for a lay role with the subcommittee. The secretariat would provide the meeting details.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ii) **COMARE – 19th Report – Interventional Radiology Review**

5.4 The secretariat would liaise with members of the group to review the work to date.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ITEM 6 PHE updates:

6.1 The PHE assessor provided a general update from PHE on the following aspects:

i) **EMF and health**

- WHO RF EHC report
- The EMF Directive
- ICNIRP Guidelines
- COSMOS
- NIHR HPRU Theme 3 Project - RF EMF exposure assessment and health
- NTP Study of Long Term Animal Exposures to Radiofrequency Fields

6.2 Members discussed the NTP study and noted that more information is needed to relate this to human exposure.

ii) **Radon**

- Implementation of the EU-Basic Safety Standard
- Shale gas
- Workplace basements
- Radon in schools
- Radon in drinking water
- Targeted radon campaigns
- Public information
- Statistical summaries of domestic radon measurements
- Interaction between domestic energy efficiency retrofit measures and radon

ITEM 7 Any other business

7.1 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting would take place on Thursday 16th March 2017 at Wellington House. He closed the meeting at 2.35 pm.