

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

121st meeting, Thursday 22nd November 2018
Skipton House, London

Present	<i>Chair:</i>	Dr Chris Gibson	
	<i>Members:</i>	Dr Jane Barrett Dr Paul Darragh Dr Frank de Vocht Professor John Harrison Dr Ray Kemp Dr Colin Martin Professor Stephanie McKeown Dr Richard McNally Dr Tom Nunan Professor Paul Pharoah Mr Graham Smith Professor David Sutton Professor Roger Taylor Dr Mireille Toledano Ms Helen Warner	
	<i>Assessors:</i>	BEIS DoH NI EA FSA HSE PHE SEPA SG WG	
	<i>Secretariat:</i>	Dr Simon Mann Dr Emma Petty Mrs Samantha Watson	(PHE) (PHE) (PHE)

COMARE 121

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chair opened the 121st 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 Chair welcomed Dr Richard McNally and Mr Graham Smith to their first meeting as members of COMARE. Formal introductions would be given later in the meeting. The Chair noted one of the DHSC assessors has moved to a different section of the department and thanked them for their work with the committee. He also welcomed Mrs Watson (PHE), who would be assisting in minuting the meetings. Professor Sutton was congratulated on his recently awarded chair.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Professor Brenda Howard and Dr Peter Riley. Apologies were also received from the assessors for EA, ISD NHS Scotland, MHCLG, FSS, DforE, NDA and DHSC.

The Chair reminded assessors that substitutes may attend the meeting.

ITEM 1 Minutes of the 120th COMARE meeting

1.1 The minutes were accepted with one amendment.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

1.2 Members discussed the use of abbreviations in the minutes. It was noted that there is an abbreviation list available on the webpage; however members requested whether a list of relevant abbreviations could be attached to the minutes.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

1.3 The Chair noted that it has been hoped that the final draft of the ISD analysis of cancer incidence in the vicinity of Dalgety Bay would be presented at this meeting. There is still some work to do on the report, so this will now be presented at the March 2019 meeting.

ITEM 2 Matters arising

i. COMARE membership

2.1 The Chair advised members that three vacancies were advertised earlier this year and two applicants were successful at interview and were offered positions on the committee. The Chair welcomed Dr Richard McNally and Mr Graham Smith, and Dr Mann formally introduced the two new members to the committee.

2.2 The Chair reminded members that there were two outstanding vacancies on the committee: for a radiobiologist and a radiation scientist with an interest in non-ionising radiation. The secretariat will circulate the details of the posts as soon as they are advertised. Members were asked to forward them to anyone who may have an interest, including relevant societies and other groups.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

[ACTION: Members]

ii. COMARE matters

a. COMARE work programme

2.3 The Chair reminded members that the work programme includes a section on potential topics for consideration by the committee. A suggested topic for COMARE's consideration is the association of cardiovascular disease with low level radiation exposure. The Chair proposed that a small working party be set up to undertake a

scoping exercise on this issue and asked for volunteers. Six members expressed an interest in the work. It was agreed that the work would involve reviewing the literature on this topic and would be conducted primarily through email correspondence. The secretariat would arrange a teleconference to consider the terms of the working party.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

b. COMARE procedures

- 2.4 The Chair advised members that the committee's working procedures could be reviewed to be more in line with the guidance laid out in the Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees (CoPSAC). Several proposals were provided to the members for consideration, including enhancing the information available on the webpage and opening the COMARE meetings to observers. Members discussed the benefits and concerns associated with observers attending meetings. It was questioned whether the suggested timings would provide sufficient notice for observers to apply to attend; however it was noted that other scientific advisory committees (SACs) use a similar system.
- 2.5 Members were informed that the agenda may include items of reserved business for the discussion of information and documentation not in the public domain, such as draft reports. Observers would be asked to leave the meeting for these items. For practical reasons, such items would likely be placed at the end of the agenda.
- 2.6 Different levels of engagement with observers were proposed: 1. observers attend the meeting; 2. observers attend the meeting and may submit information in advance to the committee for consideration; or 3. observers may attend the meeting and may be permitted by the Chair to address the committee for an agreed time period, as agreed in advance. The Chair would have the final decision on the handling of information provided to the committee.
- 2.7 Members commented that observers may include representatives from lobby groups or those who have been antagonistic towards COMARE. There were concerns that this may impact on the discussions by members. Members were advised that observers would be seated to the side of the room during the meeting and would be required to adhere to a code of conduct, including confidentiality requirements and a ban on recording equipment. Any breach of the code would result in exclusion from future meetings.
- 2.8 The Chair mentioned that the UK & Commonwealth EMF Action Group had asked for the opportunity of attending relevant meetings as observers. The proposals would provide them with the opportunity to do so.
- 2.9 Members noted that there may be positive aspects of allowing observers, particularly as people who may be interested in joining the committee would be able to observe the workings of the committee at one of the meetings.
- 2.10 Members were content to take the proposals forward and were asked to provide further comments to the secretariat. The secretariat would update the draft procedures for observers based on the discussions and aim to put these in place for the March COMARE meeting.

[ACTION: Members]

[ACTION: Secretariat]

- 2.11 It was suggested that representation from the Office for Nuclear Regulation (ONR) in an assessor role on the committee would be welcomed. The Chair agreed to pursue this.

[ACTION: The Chair]

c. EMF concerns

- 2.12 The Chair informed members that there had been continued correspondence from the UK & Commonwealth EMF Action Group on several issues, including attendance at meetings as observers and interest in the formation of a working group for non-ionising radiation (NIR) issues. The Chair has discussed the working group suggestion with DHSC in regard to the committee's work programme. While health issues associated with electromagnetic fields (EMFs) are within COMARE's remit, the formation of a NIR working group now is

not considered a productive use of the committee's time. COMARE has received no specific requests for advice on NIR issues. The Chair reminded members that the World Health Organisation (WHO) is currently undertaking a review on radiofrequency electromagnetic fields and the committee would not wish to duplicate this work. It was proposed that following publication of the WHO report, the committee could review the document and produce a statement. Members were advised that there is UK engagement with WHO through the international EMF project. Members discussed the remit of the committee for NIR work and the balance with work on ionising radiation issues. Members were content with the proposal to review the WHO report and to maintain a watching brief on NIR issues.

d. SAHSU update

- 2.13 The Chair asked Dr Toledano to update the committee on progress with the Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) analysis of childhood cancer incidence around nuclear installations in Great Britain. Dr Toledano reminded members that previous discussions on the analysis included what should be included in terms of sites, years covered and age groups. There is a query regarding the distance measurements for the selected facilities – whether this should be taken from the geographical centroid of the facility or from the perimeter edge of the site. The difference between the two methods results in the exclusion or inclusion of 24 small areas for the analysis. Members asked what method was used previously and whether it was possible to use both. It was not clear from previous COMARE reports as to what method had been employed. Using both methods would entail additional work and it could create difficulties depending on the results. The general consensus of members was to use the geographical centroid approach; however it was agreed to check on previous analyses to determine which method was used.

[ACTION: Secretariat & Dr Toledano]

- 2.14 SAHSU have been progressing with obtaining the cancer data for 1994-2016, although some difficulties have been encountered which have delayed the proposed timing for the project. Members were provided with an updated schedule. It was noted that SAHSU may hold the data for surveillance purposes. Members were advised that there will be a charge for using the Scottish cancer data; however COMARE has no budget available to contribute towards this. Members asked about the inclusion of opt-out data in the analysis and were informed that the case had been made very strongly that this was a surveillance project and needed to include such data. The Scottish assessor agreed to take any further issues on data access back to the Scottish Government, if required. The Chair welcomed the progress to date and looked forward to the next update in March.

ITEM 3 Working Group reports:

i. Contaminations Working Group (CWG)

- 3.1 The Chair advised members that the working group had met on 21st November and drew members' attention to the particle finds considered by the CWG. It was noted that an additional particle had been retrieved from the West Foreshore at Dounreay since the update was circulated.

Sellafield

- 3.2 The EA assessor informed members that the current beach monitoring programme had surveyed 117 ha from the target of 150 ha for 2018. For 2018, 105 finds have been recovered, 91 of which are particles. The find rates are comparable to previous years.
- 3.3 In May, one particle was found above the threshold activity limit, but this was larger than 2 mm and no additional characterisation was required. The 2019 monitoring programme has been agreed with a winter break from December to January. An early draft of the PHE revised risk assessment is available and the first version of the final draft should be available early in 2019. This will then be open for technical comments, with the aim of completion by the end of the financial year.

Dounreay

- 3.4 The Dounreay monitoring for 2018 has been similar to previous years. The Best Practicable Environmental Option (BPEO) study has been delayed due to the inclusion of a wave height study. A habit survey undertaken by Stirling University found that in the summer of 2018 young children were wearing sunblock on Sandside beach that caused sand to stick to their skin. This phenomenon should be included in the risk assessments.

Dalgety Bay

- 3.5 It was reported that particle finds at Dalgety Bay increased in October after storms. It is felt that the MoD is in the best position to give an update on Dalgety Bay; however, it has not been possible to obtain representation from the MoD for COMARE. Expectations are put on the MoD contractor to scan beach material and remove and dispose of any radioactive material found. Monthly monitoring is continuing and the restrictions remain in place. The particle finds are consistent in size and activity to previous finds. SEPA continues to undertake check monitoring and has also monitored the mussel beds and the outwith areas. A single low activity particle was detected in New Harbour. The contractor held a public exhibition in October on the remediation plans that was well attended. Remediation work is expected to start in April 2019.
- 3.6 The Chair advised members that he has discussed the issue of MoD representation for COMARE with DHSC. It has been agreed that he will send a formal letter to the MoD to request representation.

[ACTION: The Chair]

- 3.7 The CWG submitted a response to the Scottish Government's consultation regarding guidance on protecting the public from radioactive contamination in land, including the draft revised statutory guidance on the Radioactive Contaminated Land (Scotland) Regulations.
- 3.8 Draft guidance for local authorities on radioactively contaminated land is being prepared by PHE for BEIS. BEIS agreed the draft guidance could be shared with the CWG – three of the six documents have been seen (historical land use, principles for assessors and FAQ) and three remain to be seen. There are some issues with differences between the devolved areas.

ii. Authorisations Working Group (AWG)

- 3.9 The Chair asked Professor David Sutton to update the committee on the work of the AWG since the last meeting. Professor Sutton informed members that the group is currently considering one consultation for a Sellafield Ltd Radioactive Substances Activities permit variation. The closing date of the consultation is 21st December 2018. The purpose of the consultation is for people to understand the proposed changes. There are no structured questions, just an open field for comments. Another consultation on the EA proposed decision will be held in 2019, which will include a reduction in some site discharge limits, removal of some site limits where discharge will cease and replacement of some plant limits with notification levels. The replacement of plant limits with notification levels will allow flexibility for decommissioning.

ITEM 4 PHE Updates

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

i. EMF and health

International developments:

- WHO RF EHC report
- ICNIRP Guidelines
- Recent animal carcinogenesis studies

UK developments:

- COSMOS
- NIHR HPRU Theme 3 Project – RF EMF exposure assessment and health
- PHE Smart metering project
- Emerging technologies – 5G

4.2 Members commented on the level of attention received by the recent animal studies, with both anti-phone use articles and rebuttal articles. Members also queried the information being provided by smart meters. It was noted that there is more communication using the home area network (HAN) than the wide area network (WAN). The WAN is normally used for the meters to submit data once a day. PHE is writing a short paper on smart meter EMF measurements for peer review. It was suggested that once published it could come to the committee.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ii. Radon

- Implementation of the EU Basic Safety Standards Directive: including Establishment of a National Radon Action Plan (NRAP), the new Ionising Radiations Regulations (IRR 2017) and the ICRP 137 report - Occupations Intakes of Radionuclides: Part 3.
- Shale gas
- Targeted radon campaigns
- Public information: UKradon.org

4.3 Members asked what level of feedback was received from the 18,000 contacted householders in new build properties fitted with radon protection. The PHE assessor agreed to check on this.

[ACTION: PHE]

4.4 The Chair noted that the change in the ICRP 137 conversion factor is significant. The HSE assessor added that HSE is looking at the practicalities with enforcing this.

ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress:

i. COMARE – Interventional Radiology issues

5.1 The Chair asked the subcommittee Vice-Chair to update the committee on progress. Professor McKeown informed members that two teleconference meetings were held by the subcommittee on the drafting of a questionnaire for hospitals. The questionnaire was trialled in Dundee and updated based on the feedback received. The final version has been sent out to 36 hospitals, with a closing date of 30th November for responses.

5.2 The plan for the report is being updated and Professor McKeown has agreed to read the first draft of the sections. It was noted that it is a very complicated subject. The updated plan will be provided to the committee at the March meeting.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

ITEM 6 COMARE submitted reports:

i. COMARE – DXA scanning issues

6.1 The Chair reminded members that the wording of one of the report's recommendations had been discussed at the last meeting in July. Since that meeting a request for a further revision had been made by DHSC, the wording of which was circulated to the committee. Members agreed to the proposed change in text for the recommendation. The Chair would relay this decision to DHSC.

[ACTION: The Chair]

6.2 The Chair advised members that COMARE has an agreed publication process which will be started once formal approval for publication is given by DHSC.

ITEM 7 Any other business

7.1 No additional business was raised at the meeting. The Chair reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Thursday 14th March 2019 at Skipton House. He thanked members for attending and closed the meeting at 1.45 pm.

Abbreviations

AWG	Authorisations Working Group
BEIS	Department for Business, Energy & Industrial Strategy
BPEO	Best Practicable Environmental Option
CoPSAC	Code of Practice for Scientific Advisory Committees
CWG	Contaminations Working Group
DforE	Department for Education
DHSC	Department of Health and Social Care
DoH NI	Department of Health for Northern Ireland
DXA	Dual X-ray Absorptometry
EA	Environment Agency
EHC	Environmental Health Criteria
EMF	Electromagnetic field
EU	European Union
FAQ	Frequently asked questions
FSA	Food Standards Agency
FSS	Food Standards Scotland
HAN	Home Area Network
HPRU	Health Protection Research Unit
HSE	Health & Safety Executive
ICNIRP	International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection
ICRP	International Commission on Radiological Protection
IRR	Ionising Radiations Regulations
ISD	Information Services Division (NHS Scotland)
MHCLG	Ministry of Housing, Communities & Local Government
MoD	Ministry of Defence
NDA	Nuclear Decommissioning Authority
NIHR	National Institute for Health Research
NIR	Non-ionising radiation
NRAP	National Radon Action Plan
ONR	Office for Nuclear Regulation
PHE	Public Health England
RF	Radio Frequency
SAC	Scientific Advisory Committee
SAHSU	Small Area Health Statistics Unit
SEPA	Scottish Environment Protection Agency
SG	Scottish Government
WAN	Wide Area Network
WG	Welsh Government
WHO	World Health Organisation