

# COMARE – Annual Report 2019

## 1. Membership

Dr Peter Riley retired from the committee in May and Ms Helen Warner completed her term of office in November. Professor Stewart Martin joined the committee in June. At the close of 2019, there were 16 appointed expert members, one appointed lay member and three vacancies on the committee.

## 2. COMARE Meetings

*Main committee:*

122<sup>nd</sup> meeting – 14<sup>th</sup> March

123<sup>rd</sup> meeting – 9<sup>th</sup> July

124<sup>th</sup> meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> November

To increase the transparency of COMARE's work, the 2019 main meetings were opened to observers to enable interested parties to hear the Committee's discussions. Two observers were present at the 122<sup>nd</sup> meeting and one observer was present at each of the 123<sup>rd</sup> and 124<sup>th</sup> meetings.

*Subcommittees, working groups and working parties:*

4<sup>th</sup> MPS(IR) Subcommittee meeting – 20<sup>th</sup> May

5<sup>th</sup> MPS(IR) Subcommittee meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> November

13<sup>th</sup> Contaminations Working Group meeting – 13<sup>th</sup> March

14<sup>th</sup> Contaminations Working Group meeting – 19<sup>th</sup> November

1<sup>st</sup> Cardiovascular Effects Working Party teleconference – 31<sup>st</sup> January

## 3. Progress on 2019-2020 work programme

*PUBLICATIONS:*

*DXA Scanning Issues*

COMARE was asked by the Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) to produce advice on medical radiation dose issues associated with dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry (DXA) scans. COMARE's 18<sup>th</sup> report ([Medical radiation dose issues associated with dual-energy X-ray absorptiometry \(DXA\) scans for sports performance assessments and other non-medical practices](#)) was published in July 2019 on the COMARE webpage.

*SUBCOMMITTEES:*

*Interventional Radiology Issues*

COMARE was asked by DHSC to produce advice on issues concerning radiation doses from interventional radiology in the UK. The established subcommittee has reviewed available information from various sources and has made strong progress in the drafting of a report. It held two meetings in 2019.

## WORKING GROUPS:

### *Contaminations*

The Contaminations Working Group (CWG) met twice in 2019 and considered updates on the respective beach monitoring programmes submitted from Dounreay and Sellafield, noting the particles detected at each site. The working group also followed the monitoring work and remediation programme being undertaken at Dalgety Bay.

### *Authorisations*

In 2019, the Authorisations Working Group (AWG) responded to three consultations, all from the Environment Agency. One consultation concerned an application to vary the radioactive substances activities permit at the Lillyhall Landfill Site; a second concerned a permit application for the Port Clarence landfill site in Teeside to accept and dispose of low level radioactive waste; and the third concerned an application to vary Sellafield Ltd's radioactive substances activities permit.

## WORKING PARTIES:

### *Cardiovascular effects*

A small working party was established to undertake a scoping exercise of the available evidence of an association of cardiovascular disease with radiation exposure, to determine if an investigation into the potential health impacts would be of merit. The working party concluded that there was sufficient evidence to take this exercise forward and a project proposal was submitted to DHSC to clarify the intent of the work.

## 4. Requests for advice

In November 2017, the Scottish Environment Protection Agency (SEPA) formally requested that COMARE update the analysis of cancer incidence around Dalgety Bay, which formed part of the 15<sup>th</sup> COMARE report. The Information Services Division of NHS National Services Scotland published their report ([Analysis of cancers associated with radiation in the area around Dalgety Bay, 2008-2017, an update for COMARE](#)) in December 2019. COMARE issued a [statement](#), welcoming the report and the findings of no meaningful excesses determined for any cancers for the time period in question.

## 5. Additional items under consideration by the committee

- COMARE receives annual updates from Public Health England (PHE) on electromagnetic fields and radon issues. The most recent updates were given on 20<sup>th</sup> November 2019. Public concerns on the health issues associated with electromagnetic fields (EMFs) were also brought to the Committee's attention throughout 2019.
- COMARE continued to work with the Small Area Health Statistics Unit (SAHSU) on the surveillance of childhood cancer incidence in the vicinity of nuclear installations in Great Britain.

## 6. Additional meetings

The Chair attended a meeting on behalf of COMARE with the CEO of Melanoma UK and representatives from DHSC and PHE regarding the use of sunbeds in the UK.

## 7. Correspondence

COMARE responded to six Freedom of Information (FOI) requests in 2019.

The Committee received and responded to correspondence regarding public concerns on the health issues associated with EMFs and other issues of relevance to COMARE. In 2019 there were 58 emails on relevant issues which required a response from COMARE. The Committee also received a positive position statement from the British Institute of Radiology endorsing Recommendation 7 of the 16<sup>th</sup> COMARE report ([Review of radiation dose issues from the use of CT in the UK](#)) for the formation of local Image Optimisation Teams.

COMARE received a complaint in 2019 regarding the handling of non-ionising radiation (NIR) affairs, which was investigated by DHSC according to its [complaints procedure](#). The complaint was not upheld by DHSC.

## 8. Items of published information provided to members

In 2019, information, in the form of peer-reviewed publications or digital publication links, was provided to Committee members for the following topics:

Ionising radiation	10 items
Non-ionising radiation (EMF)	12 items
Other (e.g. cancer causes)	2 items