**Issues of Interest Arising from the EC Article 31 Meeting (May 2017) and IAEA Radiation Safety Standards Committee (RASSC June 2017)**

IRPA is invited to attend these meetings as an observer. Items arising which may be of interest to RP practitioners include the following:

**Article 31 Meeting**

The Czech experts shared an interesting experience/challenge they had – the deliberate spreading of misinformation or ‘fake news’ relating to the reports of I131 in air in Europe in February. There was a very professional and expertly-done web campaign which seemed to be aimed at spreading alarm and distrust in authorities, which was picked up and amplified by social media. This only happened in the Czech Republic, and there was speculation that it was perhaps even a test of a ‘hybrid war’ disinformation campaign. The regulator undertook a survey after the event to try and understand its impact. Associate Societies should monitor for similar events in other countries, and be prepared to respond as appropriate.

The meeting included a scientific seminar on Emerging Issues with Regard to Organ Doses. This mainly looked at the current state of science on cardiovascular and mental (brain) effects. There is evidence of effects at ‘low doses’, but ‘low’ seems to be a relative term! However, this certainly covers dose ranges relevant to multiple CTs and collateral exposure from radiotherapy, so some guidance to medical practitioners could be appropriate. Dose response curves and any true clinical impact at what many practitioners would consider to be low dose (few mGy/y) seems uncertain. There is strong evidence that DNA is not the target mechanism, and the impact is stable and cumulative, with significant variations with age and sex. Synergism with other insults seems strong. Of course, there was a call for more research.

**RASSC**

The discussion on the review of clearance and exemption continues. The intention is to separate the two concepts into different guides, and now also to develop a Tecdoc (not a formal Guide) on trade in commodities. The issue of any possible change to the numerical clearance values continues, but with very little appetite for revision.

The IRPA President gave an invited presentation on ‘Prudence and Conservatism in Radiation Protection’, which uses clearance as a case study. This demonstrates that the impact of multiple conservatisms within the practical application of the clearance approach means that resulting doses are at least two orders of magnitude less than the principle criterion. It is important that the RP profession thinks more clearly about the level of conservatism we apply in our assessments and systems, otherwise we are driving doses down to miniscule levels with no benefit to society.

Note that there is an intention to develop an IAEA Safety Guide on the Use of Radiotracers.

There was a half day Topical Session on Occupational Exposure. UNSCEAR noted that occupational exposure constitutes around 0.2% of total exposure, and of this, 57% is due to natural sources. There is a challenge in collecting data, especially for exposure to natural sources. Various databases were discussed – the NEA ISOE database covers nuclear operations, and there is now a new IAEA ISEMIR system for all other exposures. In a discussion on eye doses there was a very strong view presented that passive monitoring is doomed to failure (because the detectors will not universally be worn), and the future is in active dosimetry systems. There was also a belief that more and more eye protection is coming into regular use, which is comforting and shows that the medical profession is responding to advice.

Roger Coates

IRPA President