Impacts of Covid-19 on RP

Testimonies from the Young Generation

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Activating the IRPA Young Generation Network

**Objective**

Bring to light the impacts of Covid-19 from the Young Generation in Radiation Protection point of view

**Method**

Testimonies collected by questionnaire
- The difficulties encountered in the job because of the Covid-19?
- How do you ensure the continuity/consistency of RP?
- What are the remaining difficulties?

**Actions**

- Diffusion via IRPA YGN LC
- Start: 26 March
- Last answer: 15 May
- Testimonies made ‘public’ on the IRPA YGN Blog
Overview

- Information about the participants
- Analysis by sector of activity

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Information about the (30) participants

• Answers from 8 countries/regions
• Participants are “multi-tasks” in general: their job covers several RP topics and/or they share several responsibilities in RP
• ⇒ the testimonies cover a large panorama of situations
Nuclear cycle and related industries

- Industries have been deemed ‘essential’ and have pursued operation
  - ‘Non-priority activities’ have been postponed (e.g. calibration, QA, …)
- **Less RP staff** and **numerous adaptations** on-site
- Reduced RP staff have led to over-work and difficulties to gain information from the field
  - “I cannot adequately do this without seeing the process in person”
  - Concern about a general decline of RP results and indicators have been expressed
- Clarification were needed in the **coordination of radiological & sanitary risks** e.g.
  - Wearing ventilated helmet vs. mask
  - Disinfection of exit monitors sensors
Medical (= hospital)

• In front line during the pandemic and all ‘non-priority activities’ have been postponed e.g.
  • Non-essential operations using radiation, calibration, QA, etc.
  • Monthly control of dosimeters (or frequency ↓)
  • Reduced presence of RP staff
• Clarification were needed in the coordination of radiological & sanitary risks,
  • E.g. disinfection of TLD, administration of radiopharmaceuticals, radiology imaging
  • ⇒ Interdisciplinary works and (personalized) communication have proved to be the most efficient
• ⇒ The young generation has often been put in front line for communication (ex. hotline)
Research (associated with the nuclear industry and medical sector: monitoring, dosimetric services, etc.)

- The programme of activities has been redeployed
- (1) For ‘paper-based RP work’
  - Teleworking has become the new standard
  - The basis of RP job has not changed
  - But numerous practical difficulties have been encountered
- A singularity of the young generation: the presence of (very) young children has raised peculiar difficulties, notably in the personal vs. professional balance
  - “I cannot do telework to take care of my baby”, “it is HARD to juggle both”
  - “Tough”, “stressful” situation and concern about the psychological impacts have been expressed
Research (associated with the nuclear industry and medical sector: monitoring, dosimetric services, etc.)

- (2) ‘Practical-based RP works’ (= cannot be performed remotely)
  - Restricted to the essential
  - Most have been considered as ‘non-priority’ and postponed/cancelled
- The young generation is particularly represented in these jobs e.g.
  - Laboratory experiments and calculation
  - Samples collection and measurements (environmental monitoring)
  - Fundamental research - often in connexion with an university/a PhD
    - “I cannot access my laboratory to perform my research”
- Some young generation participants have been placed on mandatory leaves by Senior Management
Regulation

• Office work have been replaced by home work without "influenced the work".
• On-site inspections have been postponed.
• Virtual inspections have been put in place in some cases:
  • Via questionnaires for X-ray equipment.
  • The position that virtual inspection cannot replace on-site inspections have been expressed.
**Education and training**

• The **young generation** is particularly represented in this sector
• Face-to-face courses have been cancelled or replaced by remote teaching
• Early practical difficulties have been encountered with the new tools
• **Teachers** have reported that the switch was a **big challenge** and has required huge work for adaptation
  • And “Are the message still passed?”
• **Students** have reported concerns about the diminution of interaction
  • “I cannot have discussion with my senior”
• When others have seen the bright side
  • “Students who are shy could actively speak through the typing”
  • “This is a very good opportunity to introduce the remote teaching”
Synthesis

- All RP sectors have been affected
  - ± important depending on the sectors and the type of activity
  - ∀ Meetings, events, business trip etc. have been postponed/cancelled
  - ∀ Tele-working/conference have been implemented
- Paper-based work have faced organisational impacts ‘only’
  - However the consequences on the consistency of RP cannot be disregarded
- A reduced RP presence in hospitals and nuclear-cycle related industry
  - Decline of RP indicators? Ensuring a high level of RP might not be possible on long term
- Many challenges in the coordination of RP & sanitary risks
- Research and RP procedures etc. not the priority
- Unprecedented switch in education and training in RP
Synthesis

• Specific items associated with the young generation have been identified, e.g.
  • Specific activities that require the presence at research installation, laboratories, hospitals (e.g. for PhD, post-grade, ...) cannot be pursued
  • Education at home and the limited teacher-students connexion
  • The presence of (very) young children at home during confinement and the increased difficulties in the management of personal/professional balance
  • The understanding of Senior’s decisions
Participants have drafted comparisons between Covid and RP

- The knowledge in RP have been reported as very useful in the situation
  - Preventing from radiation and from virus has been considered as ‘comparable’
- Hospitals in Japan used their experience from Fukushima accident
  - E.g. for the triage or the management of PPE
- Communication in emergency are comparable
  - Fake news have spread rapidly
  - The question of the message from experts vs. social media
  - Harmonization of the messages from experts
- Concerns about the initiative of using radiation for disinfection purposes have been expressed
Some lessons-learned

• Working with digital tools have proven to be possible
  • Is the young generation more “flexible” technologically-wise (?)
• **Access to document/data** was an issue and it is recommended to consider access via VPN
• In all sectors, transdisciplinary working group, internal training and personalized communication have appeared the most advisable for the elaboration and the dissemination of new procedures
• It it recommended to consider **multiple alternatives for ‘non-routine situations’**, including ultimate RP contingency plan (nuclear industry)
• Where the organization is prepared, the transition have been reported as “smooth”
Perspectives

• Networks are more important than ever in a context of pandemic
• The IRPA YGN took the initiative to share and communicate about the impacts of the Covid-19 on radiation protection
• Result: The young perspective on (‘all’) RP areas in this unprecedented situation
• Communication of the ppt (and translation if needed) by national Young Generation Networks
• Feedback and agreement on the challenges (still) at stake
• A synthesis on text format will be finalized in 2020

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**Bonus question**

*What is your preferred drink during confinement?*

- **Tea (black/green)** (8)
- **Soft beverages** (5)
- **Coffee** (4)
- **Alcoholic beverages** (4)
- **Decadent beverages** (3)
One website internet
http://www.irpa.net/YPN/index.asp

One mini-blog (password)
https://irpaygn.posthaven.com