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ICRP Initiative on Ethics in Radiological Protection



In 2013, IRPA and the International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP) agreed to collaborate on an effort to review the ethical basis of radiological protection. ICRP had established Task Group 94 to develop publication on the ethical foundations of the system of radiological protection aiming to consolidate the basis of ICRP's recommendations, to improve the understanding of the system and to provide a basis for communication on radiation risk and its perception. IRPA is helping bring to bear the knowledge, skills, and experience of radiation protection practitioners from all corners of the globe on this important effort.

The ICRP Task Group is taking a novel and open approach to this important subject, in particular through a series of workshops being held around the world. Within the IRPA-ICRP agreement to cooperate, many of these are organised by IRPA Associate Societies. As you will see elsewhere in this issue of the IRPA Bulletin, Asian, European, and North American regional workshops on the ethical basis of the system of radiological protection have already been held in Daejeon (Korea), Milan (Italy), and Baltimore (USA), organised by the Korean, Italian, French, US, Canadian and Mexican Associate Societies. Through collaboration between radiation protection professionals and applied ethicists in these and other workshops significant progress has already been made, identifying some of the key values that underlie the system of radiological protection.

A second series of Asian, European, and North American regional workshops on the Ethical Dimensions of the Radiological Protection System is being planned for 2015. Hopefully announcements will be available on the IRPA website by the time this Bulletin is published.

International Radiation Protection Association

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The 1st IRPA North American Workshop on Ethical Dimensions

(Submitted by Dick Toohey)

Front: Johnson, Burnfield, Sturchio, Vetter, Cool, Czarwinski, Kurihara, Fujimichi

Rear: Lambert, Toohey, Lochard, Lazo, Kase, Winsor, Ulsh, Bailey, Hamada

Not shown: Anderson, Boyd, Kosako, Sasaki



The First IRPA North American Workshop on the Ethical Dimensions of Radiological Protection was held in Baltimore, Maryland on July 17-18, 2014, immediately following the 59th Annual Meeting of the Health Physics Society. Speakers included R. Czarwinski (IRPA), J. Lochard (ICRP), R. Toohey (IRPA), C. Kurihawa (NIRS), R. Vetter (Mayo Clinic), R. Johnson (RSCI), E. Bailey (AAHP), and T. Kosako (U. Tokyo). The discussions focused on the ethics of radiation protection in medicine and in public communications.

The primary issues in medical applications of radiation are considerations of worker dose to the practitioner vs. patient care, risk communication to both workers and patients, and stakeholder engagement in medicine. Most people in the interventional radiology suite are not highly exposed, but those who are exposed can be highly exposed. Can worker exposure limits ever be deliberately exceeded? Yes, if tissue reaction limits are not exceeded, the stochastic limit could be raised, but only if the worker (i.e., the interventional radiologist) signs an informed consent document. Could that also apply to others in the suite, such as nurses, technologists, and anesthesiologists? That is not so clear, as they could be under “coercion,” i.e., trying to keep their jobs to agree to a raised exposure limit.

Should we change the risk equation from risk of mortality to risk of injury? It turns out that hospital employees have a low mortality risk but a high injury risk. Can this exception through informed consent be applied to other occupations, e.g. industrial radiography? Could evacuation be voluntary in an emergency situation? What about early return to an evacuated area?

There has been no discussion in developing the RP system of differences between medical practice and other occupations; because of consideration of patient benefit and risk vs. practitioner benefit and risk, we need to revisit the situation. The medical ethic of patient care will always take precedence over the ethic of worker RP.

In public communications, the RP expert is not the decider, but rather helps deciders to make informed decisions. Communications start with the prevailing current circumstances and reality of the situation. The objectives of a communications effort cannot include building trust, because that can only be built over a long period; trusting does not necessarily include agreeing with us. However, the communications effort helps to develop trust, and if poorly done, can destroy trust. Communications must assist people to make decisions; it is much more than just risk communication focused on data. One aim is to enhance the RP culture that focuses on safety; risk communications is only a part of the whole. We have put too much focus on the risk; we need to increase focus on protection methods, self-help, and empowerment. We must provide actionable information.

The public is anyone who is not an RP specialist. We must target communications to the target group and tailor messages to the audience’s level of wealth, education, etc. The ethical principles of dignity and autonomy generate the public’s “right-to-know”; communications should provide the public the skills to apply RP principles to self- and community protection. Communicating probabilities usually doesn’t help, especially very small probabilities; in fact, risk acceptance is usually independent of the probability. In Japan people want to know the risk probability of 10-20 mSv exposures; RP experts may say the risks are too small to be of concern, but people do not understand.

The 1st Asian Workshop on the Ethical Dimensions

(Submitted by Kunwoo Cho)



The 1st Asian Workshop on the Ethical Dimensions of the Radiological Protection System was organized by Korean Association for Radiation Protection in cooperation with ICRP and IRPA and was held on 27-28 August 2013 at the KINS headquarters in Daejeon, Korea. The workshop discussed the questions such as what issues of radiation protection refer to ethics and what are the ethical values (explicit and implicit) that underlie the system of radiological protection?

The followings were the parts of recommendations of the workshop: the respect of individuals and principles of justice in the ICRP Publications should be more explicit; the dialogue on the ethics of radiological protection should be open to all interested stakeholders to facilitate mutual understanding of the system; there is the need to revisit whether individual rights to happiness or justice has been respected enough, in particular for minorities; the values of the ethics of radiological protection could be, and came up with tolerance of people' view, human dignity, justice, respect for persons, beneficence, prudence, understanding/simplicity and wellbeing.

The followings were the parts of conclusion of the workshop: it was noted that classic risk communication has been top-down and patriarchal rather than dealt with questions that the public want to know and the importance of a quick communication was emphasized; the radiological protection system should place more emphasis on well-being of the public, which means the system should care not only about people's health or safety but also about how people feel on the sense of security; the radiological protection experts have failed to find a scientific way in regard to discussion of risk tolerability due to excessive emphasis on science as a major cause for the failure on the ground that what tells tolerable is ethics, not science.

Full report can be found at: <http://www.karp.or.kr/english/index.html>.

The 1st European Workshop on the Ethical Dimensions

(Submitted by Marie Claire and Thierry Schneider)



In December 2013, the Italian and French Societies of Radiation Protection in cooperation with ICRP and IRPA have organized the 1st European Workshop on the Ethical Dimension of the Radiological Protection System. The workshop was structured around a number of plenary presentations, followed by working groups aimed to examine the potential implications of ethical issues in the implementation of the system.

Among these issues, it was acknowledged that dignity is a crucial one to cope with the implementation of system in specific situation (notably for the protection of people living in contaminated areas). The participants underpinned a convergence between procedural ethics and behavioral ethics, with transparency and accountability relating to procedure, while honesty and humility relating to behavior. It was quoted that ethics play a role when it comes to provide a rationale for societal justification of a radiation risk. Finally, the discussion also pointed the key role of deliberation processes for addressing the ethical issues associated with the implementation of the RP system.

It has been reiterated the interest to address the values, the procedures and the behavioural aspects, with the final target and scope to discuss and to better understand the applications of the ethical values, rather than focussing the discussion around the theoretical meaning of these values. The participants quoted the need to diffuse the key ethical values together with the considerations on their implementation to the radiation protection professionals for their day-to-day practice. It has been mentioned the interest of debating the preparation of the ICRP Publication on ethical dimension of RP System within a broader community in cooperation with IRPA and other international organizations.

Report and presentations at: <http://www.airp-asso.it/airpnews/377-etica.html>;
<http://www.sfrp.asso.fr/spip.php?article457>

IRPA Code of Ethics

These principles are intended to aid members of IRPA Associate Societies in maintaining a professional level of ethical conduct related to radiation protection. They are to be regarded as guidelines. Members of Societies may use them to determine the propriety of their conduct in all relationships in which they are exercising their professional expertise. Associate Societies are encouraged to adopt or incorporate them as appropriate. If there is reason to believe that a member has breached this Code of Ethics, the Society to which the member belongs is expected to investigate and take appropriate measures.

1. Members shall exercise their professional skill and judgement to the best of their ability and carry out their responsibilities with integrity.
2. Members shall not allow conflict of interest, management pressures or possible self-interest to compromise their professional judgement and advice. In particular members shall not compromise public welfare and safety in favour of an employer's interest.
3. Members shall not undertake any employment or consultation that is contrary to the public welfare or to the law.
4. Members shall protect the confidentiality of information obtained during the course of their professional duties, provided that such protection is not in itself unethical or illegal.
5. Members shall ensure that relations with interested parties, other professionals and the general public are based on, and reflect, the highest standards of integrity, professionalism and fairness.
6. Members should satisfy themselves as to the extent and content of the professional functions required in any particular circumstances, especially those involving the public safety. Members should not undertake professional obligations that they are not qualified, or do not believe themselves to be competent, to carry out.
7. Members should take all reasonable steps to ensure that persons carrying out work done under their supervision or direction are competent, and not under undue pressure from workload or other causes.
8. Members should strive to improve their own professional knowledge, skill and competence.
9. Professional reports, statements, publications or advice produced by members should be based on sound radiation protection principles and science, be accurate to the best of their knowledge and be appropriately attributed.
10. Members should, whenever practicable and appropriate, correct misleading, sensational and unwarranted statements by others concerning radiation and radiation protection.
11. Members should take advantage of opportunities to increase public understanding of radiation protection and of the aims and objectives of IRPA and their own Society.

4th European Regional IRPA Congress 2014 in Geneva

The 4th European Regional IRPA Congress was held on June 23-27 in Geneva. The rationale to choose Geneva as the conference venue was not only the extraordinary support by the Swiss government but also the intention to develop a close cooperation with the international organizations based there.

From the beginning the conference was run as a project jointly run by the German-Swiss Association for Radiation Protection (FS) and our French speaking colleagues organized in Association Romande de Radioprotection (ARRAD). Together with some legal considerations this was one reason to found a dedicated association in Switzerland for the project management. For the practical organization a local professional agency, Symporg SA, was engaged.

Critical for the success of the congress was, as usual, the selection of partners and teams for the preparation. The agreement of Rolf Michel and Christian Wernli to chair the scientific committee was the basis for an efficient and effective development of an interesting congress program. François Bochud and Christophe Murith agreed to take over the lead for the organization committee, who mastered the practical preparation and realization successfully.

The overarching subject of the congress was „Safety Culture“, chosen mainly because IRPA had announced the results of their intensive work in this field for this year. The selection of invited speakers and of the topics of the plenary sessions followed closely this general theme.

It was the intention of the organizers to keep the congress fee considerably lower than previous congresses, because we anticipated high costs for accommodation in Geneva. The budget calculation was based on the experiences of the congress in Helsinki; for the number of expected participants we started with the (cautious) assumption of about 700 to reach a balanced budget.

While the applications of oral and poster contributions exceeded our expectations already before the first deadline, the registration of participants was rather hesitant, at the deadline for early registration there were less than 200 registrations.

The final statistics:

- 636 registered scientists and professionals from 48 countries participated in sessions and discussions
- 244 (main) authors presented their messages by posters and 104 by oral presentations
- 56 chairpersons directed 40 plenary and parallel sessions
- 31 speakers followed our invitation to give their views mainly during 7 plenary sessions
- 26 companies and organizations showed their latest technical developments, and
- 12 lecturers offered refresher courses in the early mornings.

Further, 47 quilt artists from 12 countries gave an “impressive view on the variety of associations and interpretations connected to the topics of the congress in the minds of non-professionals, ranging from the beauties to the perils of radiation” (from *Rolf Michel in his final summary presentation*); 11 of them prepared and attended the exhibition on site.

Integrated into the congress was a session of young scientists and professionals who had been nominated by their national societies. Alfred Hefner and his jury mastered the difficult task to identify the award winners among 12 highly qualified candidates. Similarly, a jury chaired by Christophe Murith awarded the three best posters.

Most of the presentations are available in the internet (as far as the authors agreed); a selection of especially interesting papers will be reviewed and published in *Radiation Protection Dosimetry* in 2015. This also includes a comprehensive view by Rolf Michel on the contents of the presentations, especially from the point of view of Safety Culture.

Klaus Henrichs, Congress President

Acknowledgment to IRPA Bulletin Translators

A big thank you goes to our bulletin translators. Their timely and professional translations made the first two issues of IRPA Bulletin accessible to thousands of readers whose working language is not English. The translators are:

Arabic: Safwat Salama

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Japanese: Haruyuki Ogino, Minoru Okoshi, Michiya Sasaki, Daisuke Sugiyama

Spanish: Aime Navarro

We hope the IRPA Bulletins can be translated into many more languages in the future.

IRPA Commission on Publications

Call for Paper from IRPA AS

IRPA has 49 Associated Societies (AS). It is very important for us to get to know each other. In the first two issues of IRPA Bulletin, we have introduced three IRPA AS: The Cameroon Radiological Protection Society, the IRPA Egypt, and the Society of Radiological Protection, UK. The IPRA Commission on Publications plans to introduce one IRPA AS in each issue of the IRPA Bulletin in the future. Interested AS are encouraged to submit a short introduction (300 – 400 words with a nice photo) to cop@irpa.net. Thank you.

IRPA Commission on Publications