BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The World Health Organization (WHO) is the coordinating authority for global public health work within the United Nations system. More than 7000 WHO staff members work at its 150 WHO country offices, six regional offices and headquarters in Geneva. Its governing body is the World Health Assembly (WHA), made up of delegates from the 194 WHO Member States. WHO has a radiation programme within the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health (HQ FWC/PHE). For more information see WHO website1.

RELEVANT ACTIVITIES HELD BETWEEN NOVEMBER 2017 AND JUNE 2018

Radon and NORM exposures
WHO is working to support its Member States for the implementation of international standards for radiation protection in existing exposure situations. WHO is moderating the RADON listserv, a platform for sharing information which, since its creation, has been continuously expanding. WHO is an observer on the new European Commission Article 31 Working Party on exposure to natural sources of ionising radiations (WP NAT). WHO was the Guest Editor of the December issue of the newsletter of the WHO Collaborating Centre on Housing and Health from the Baden-Württemberg State Health Office on the topic of radon and energy conservation. WHO will co-sponsor the IAEA draft Safety Report on “Design and Implementation of Representative Indoor Radon Surveys”, the upcoming IAEA web-based training material on radon, and relevant radon-related webinars organized with the IAEA.

Radioactivity in food and drinking water
To support the interpretation and application of the Chapter 9 of the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-water Quality (GDWQ) related to radiological aspects of drinking-water, WHO has produced the document entitled “Management of radioactivity in drinking-water”, providing guidance to support the management of radionuclides in drinking-water in emergency and non-emergency situations. It was written in the format of stand-alone Q&As, complemented by case studies based on country experiences. The publication will be available for free download by mid-June 2018 at the WHO website2. Two representatives of WHO joined FAO and IAEA at a Steering Group Meeting held as part of the existing collaboration to support the implementation of standards on radioactivity in food and drinking water (Vienna, Austria, 111 December 2017) and then attended a consultancy meeting on “Developing Guidance on the Control of Radioactivity in Food and Drinking Water in Non-Emergency Situations” convened by the IAEA (Vienna, Austria, 12-15 December 2017). As a follow-up of these meetings, WHO performed a preliminary dietary exposure assessment for various natural radionuclides in food. UNSCEAR data on concentration of natural radionuclides in different food groups were considered and dose-conversion factors for 3 age groups were used. WHO provided the food consumption values for each of the commodities including disaggregated values for seafood consumption, using 4 different food consumption databases. WHO continues contributing to this Steering Group during the process of collection of information from countries and literature review, and will interact with FAO and WHO to undertake an evaluation of the data.

1 More information at http://www.who.int/about/en/
Medical exposure

WHO is supporting the implementation of the Bonn Call for Action (BCfA) under the framework of its Global Initiative on Radiation Safety in Health Care Settings3 and in this context, WHO cosponsored the International Conference on Radiation Protection in Medicine organized by the IAEA (Vienna, Austria, 11-15 December 2017) and continue cooperating with the IAEA on a web-based BCfA Implementation Toolkit to be developed during 2018. WHO cosponsored the International Conference on Radiation Medicine (Riyadh, Saudi Arabia, 11-14 February 2018). WHO is developing a policy guidance document to improve justification and clinical governance of the use of medical imaging in asymptomatic people (drafting meeting in Geneva, Switzerland, 19-20 February 2018). WHO is co-sponsoring the 6th International Conference on Preventing Overdiagnosis to be held in Copenhagen, Denmark, on 20-22 August 2018, during which will organize two seminars on (i) Use of CT in Asymptomatic People and (ii) Thyroid Cancer Screening. WHO continued working in cooperation with the IAEA, IOMP and IRPA to develop guidance on establishment and strengthening of Radiation Safety Culture in Health Care. Three joint sessions on this topic has been co-organized at IRPACUBA (Havana, Cuba, 18th April 2018), AOCR-05 (Melbourne, Australia, 24th May 2018) and WC2018 (Prague, 5th June 2018). WHO, WFNMB4 and ICRP co-organized a Joint Symposium on Radiological Protection in Nuclear Medicine for Personalized Care during the 12th Congress of Nuclear Medicine (Melbourne, Australia, 23rd April 2018). WHO co-organized with the ISR5 a Workshop on Radiation Risk Communication in Pediatric Healthcare (Vienna, Austria, 10th December 2017) and has just finalized a set of leaflets for patients and parents to support benefit-risk dialogue in health care on pediatric imaging, CT scans, image-guided interventions and nuclear medicine, based on the WHO report on radiation risk communication in paediatric imaging. The Spanish edition of this WHO report was launched at the XI Latin American IRPA Congress (Havana, Cuba, 16-20 April 2018) and the French edition is planned to be launched at the upcoming AFRIRPA-05 (Tunis, September 2018). WHO hosted the ICRP annual meeting with liaison institutions (Geneva, Switzerland, 17 November 2017), participated in the NCRP Programme Committees’ meeting and contributed to the NCRP Annual Meeting on Radiation Protection Responsibility in Medicine (4-6 March 2018), participated in the European Congress of Radiology ECR2018 (Vienna, Austria, March 2018), contributed to the 11th Arab Radiology Conference (Alexandria, Egypt, 24-27 April 2018), participated in the IAEA Technical Meeting on Preventing Unintended and Accidental Exposures in Nuclear Medicine (Vienna, Austria 16-18 May 2018) and in the meeting of the HERCA WG on Medical Applications (Luxembourg, 22-23 March 2017). WHO is cooperating with EC in the MEDIRAD project, as special advisor at the Stakeholders’ Board. WHO continued cooperating with IRPA in the preparation and execution of the Regional IRPA Congresses being held during 2018 in Latin America (April 2018), Asia (May 2018), Europe (June 2018) and Africa (September 2018), and is cosponsoring the upcoming International IRPA Congress (Seoul, Korea, 2020).

Emergency Preparedness and Response

WHO continues working to support the implementation of the International Health Regulations (IHR-2005) and strengthen national capacities for radiation emergency preparedness and response (EPR). WHO published November 2017 the document “Iodine Thyroid Blocking- Guidelines for use in planning for and responding to radiological and nuclear emergencies”, available for free download at the WHO website6. Information about WHO EPR-related work is periodically summarized at the Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network (REMPAN) e-Newsletters7. The EPR-related activities conducted by the WHO Radiation Program and its two global expert networks- i.e. REMPAN8 and BioDoseNet9 - will be reported by WHO during the upcoming EPrEsC meeting (Vienna, Austria, 12-14 June 2018).

WHO is represented at this 44th RASSC meeting and looks forward to continuing its cooperation with the IAEA on the development and implementation of radiation safety standards worldwide.

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2. WFNMB: World Federation of Nuclear Medicine and Biology
3. ISR: International Society of Radiology
4. [http://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/259510/9789241550185-eng.pdf;jsessionid=6A833F568569A0CFDD4610A4A9F14F0F?sequence=1]