

COMMITTEE ON THE MEDICAL ASPECTS OF RADIATION IN THE ENVIRONMENT

117th meeting, Tuesday 18th July 2017
Richmond House, London

Present

Chairman: Dr Chris Gibson

Members: Dr Jane Barratt
Dr Paul Darragh
Professor John Harrison
Dr Ray Kemp
Professor Stephanie McKeown
Dr Colin Martin
Professor Kevin Prise
Professor Roger Taylor
Dr Mireille Toledano
Professor Richard Wakeford
Ms Helen Warner
Professor Peter Warwick

Assessors: BEIS
EA
FSA
HSE
NDA
PHE
SEPA
SG
WG

Secretariat: Dr Simon Mann (PHE)
Dr Emma Petty (PHE)
Ms Kim Stonell (PHE)

117th COMARE MEETING

OPENING ANNOUNCEMENTS

The Chairman opened the 117th meeting and welcomed members. He advised members of the private nature of the meeting and that papers should remain confidential. Members were asked to declare any interests during the meeting.

The Chairman welcomed the substitute assessor for the Welsh Government and the new SEPA assessor. He thanked the previous SEPA assessor for his work on the committee.

The Chairman advised members that Professor Mark Pearce had resigned from the committee and thanked him for his work on the committee, including chairing the Sellafield and Dounreay Review Subcommittee for the production of the 17th COMARE report.

Apologies

Apologies were received from Dr Frank de Vocht, Professor Brenda Howard, Dr Tom Nunan, Professor Paul Pharoah, Dr Peter Riley and Dr David Sutton. Apologies were also received from the assessors for DoH NI, SG, WG, SEPA and DH.

The Chairman reminded assessors that substitutes may attend the meeting and requested that departments ensure representatives are present at the meetings to comment on items relevant to them.

ITEM 1 Minutes of the 116th COMARE meeting

- 1.1 The minutes were accepted without amendment.
- 1.2 Members queried the consultation weblink in item 3 and the SEPA assessor agreed to investigate this.
[ACTION: SEPA]
- 1.3 Members suggested that a generic list of abbreviations be placed on the committee webpage for use with the minutes and other documents.
[ACTION: Secretariat]
- 1.4 In response to an action from the last meeting to provide an update on data harmonisation for cancer registration in the UK, the PHE assessor advised members that Wales will use the same approach as England for cancer registration. A further update will be provided in due course.
[ACTION: PHE]

ITEM 2 Matters arising

i. AGNIR

- 2.1 The Chairman advised members that AGNIR ended in May 2017 following the publication of its final report and he cited PHE's statement on AGNIR. The Chairman reminded members of the previous agreement with DH that the activities of AGIR and AGNIR would be included in COMARE's work programme and any advice requests would be addressed through the formation of a subcommittee with co-opted experts.
- 2.2 Dr Mann suggested PHE could continue to provide an annual summary on non-ionising radiation work, but members with expertise in the topic area may be brought in to assist with requests for advice. Current work on non-ionising radiation topics was discussed. The Chairman agreed that an update on non-ionising radiation topics should continue to be an annual item on the agenda, providing as much intelligence as possible. So that members could be made aware of wider issues, alerts could be provided on UK and international expert groups undertaking reviews. Members questioned whether a timeline of forthcoming reports could be produced; however it was noted that it was not generally known when reviews were going to be published.
[ACTION: Secretariat]

ii. COMARE membership

2.3 The Chairman advised members of current and forthcoming vacancies on the committee. Members were asked to consider what expertise should be targeted during recruitment to the committee. Expertise in non-ionising radiation was suggested for dosimetry topics, although it was noted that PHE has dosimetry expertise that could be brought in for subcommittees.

iii. COMARE matters

a. Thyroid research proposal

2.4 The Chairman reminded members of a recommendation from the 17th COMARE report that there should be a further and more detailed epidemiological study of thyroid cancer using the Cumbrian birth cohort. It is believed that a full set of data for the cohort is available for use with such a project.

2.5 The Chairman drew members' attention to the comment on the thyroid cancer study used in the 17th COMARE report and the authors' response. The correspondence strengthens the basis for undertaking a birth cohort study and the Chairman will pursue with DH colleagues to push the project forward.

[ACTION: The Chairman]

b. NGO meeting request

2.6 The Chairman reminded members of the invitation for COMARE to attend a NGO forum. The Chairman had liaised with BEIS on the meeting proposal put to COMARE to determine an appropriate agenda. Representation from COMARE will be at the 12th September 2017 NGO forum. The Chairman and BEIS have agreed that representatives from the committee would meet with as wide a group of NGOs as practicable and would focus on two issues (the 17th COMARE report and areas of future research interest). The BEIS assessor advised members that the Minister for Energy and Industry, Mr Richard Harrington, was due to attend the forum and was expected to contribute to the meeting.

2.7 Members were concerned about the adversarial nature of the previous forum attended by COMARE. The BEIS assessor advised members that the forum will be co-chaired to ensure that the meeting is managed effectively. Members were further concerned that the forum could digress into other areas of interest to the NGOs outside of COMARE's remit. The Chairman confirmed that COMARE would aim to focus on the given topics rather than a broad ranging discussion; however it was hoped there would be a constructive outcome from the meeting.

ITEM 3 Working group reports:

i. Contaminations Working Group

3.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the particle updates received by the CWG.

Sellafield

3.2 The EA assessor confirmed that the 2016/17 programme was completed successfully. The programme will be moving from a financial year basis to a calendar year basis, and work for this year is well underway. As at the end of March 2017 the total find number was 2852 finds in 1930 hectares.

3.3 Members were informed of an unusual object find (formerly called a stone) in April 2017 on Allonby beach. EA will be keeping a watching brief.

3.4 The Sellafield Particles Working Group's main focus will be the revision of the risk assessment. Sellafield Limited has produced its annual report for 2016/17 and the weblink will be provided to the secretariat.

[ACTION: EA]

3.5 The Chairman asked whether there would be further offshore work by NuGen for the Moorside development. The EA assessor advised that although the work is on hold at present, it is anticipated there will be further

dredging and moving of material, but this will be limited. The issue of beach access for monitoring during this work will be discussed with NuGen.

Dounreay

- 3.6 The SEPA assessor noted that find rates are the same as previously reported. Six particles have been found on Sandside beach in 2017 to date. The most recent find on the Dounreay foreshore was in January 2017. A find in December 2016 had a very low Cs-137 activity and has been submitted for further analysis. Routine monitoring continues at the site.

Dalgety Bay

- 3.7 The SEPA assessor informed members that the current protection measures remain in place. The MoD has continued to monitor the beach every month. SEPA has made two monitoring checks this year and found three or four particles above the set limit. The SEPA assessor added that the access agreements are now in place for the remediation work to progress. The Chairman looked forward to receiving updates on progress.
- 3.8 Regarding the implementation of the Basic Safety Standards Directive (BSSD), particularly in relation to contaminated land, the BEIS assessor advised members that a second workshop during the consultation period is still planned. COMARE's participation would be welcomed. It was noted that the BSSD will be implemented in full and in a timely manner.

ii. **Authorisations Working Group**

- 3.9 Professor Warwick drew members' attention to the details of a consultation by the EA on an application for a permit variation by Sellafield Limited. Three variations were requested. He cited COMARE's response to the consultation. This will be circulated to AWG members once a response to the queries raised has been received.

[ACTION: Secretariat]

- 3.10 Members discussed the trigger for applications or consultations to be considered the AWG. The EA assessor advised that the EA has guidance which defines when consultations are undertaken. The SEPA assessor added that there are similar protocols as to whether a consultation is undertaken by SEPA.

ITEM 4 COMARE publications:

i. **COMARE – 17th Report**

a. **Correspondence**

- 4.1 The Chairman drew members' attention to the recent correspondence received by COMARE members, and the response from the Chairman following a careful review of the scientific relevance of the additional evidence presented. A further letter, dated 15th May 2017, has since been received by the Chairman and members discussed the content of the letter. It was agreed that that all of the original points raised have been considered and a robust reply has been given. Due to the confusion between hereditary and teratogenic effects in the evidence presented, members were asked to provide recent reviews of hereditary and teratogenic effects from internal radiation exposure.

[ACTION: Members]

- 4.2 The Chairman added that he had received notification of a related editorial that would be published in a peer reviewed journal, and of a further report being sent to BEIS for review that includes a critique of COMARE's response.

- 4.3 The Chairman asked members to consider valid areas for future research where there is a lack of current knowledge. Members suggested cardiovascular effects at low levels of radiation; establishing the mechanism for cardiovascular disease and other non-cancer effects at low doses; and the public understanding of risk,

particularly in relation to cancer protection. Members also discussed differences between internal and external radiation exposure. A further paper is expected on plutonium exposure in the Sellafield and Mayak workforce, but this will not consider hereditary effects.

- 4.4 Professor Wakeford drew members' attention to a large review paper coordinated by the Oxford Martin School looking at helping people to understand issues associated with radiation. This is expected to be published in the coming months and the publication details would be provided to the secretariat.

[ACTION: Professor Wakeford]

ITEM 5 COMARE publications in progress

i. COMARE – Interventional Radiology issues

- 5.1 The Chairman informed members that a number of actions were agreed at the last meeting of the MPS(IR) subcommittee and letters have been sent out accordingly, requesting information. It is hoped that substantial data will be available for the next meeting.

- 5.2 Dr Martin noted that IPEM are drafting a report on personal dosimetry and confirmed that a copy of IPEM's draft report had been sent to HSE for consideration. Professor Taylor added that work was needed to establish a baseline on dosimetry for the range of interventional activities undertaken and which staff groups are involved. Members discussed what standards ought to be applied for limiting staff exposure and how compliance with personal monitoring.

ii. COMARE – DXA scanning issues

- 5.3 Dr Martin took members through the chapters of the draft report.

- 5.4 It was noted that there was a suggestion that DXA was being used by professional football and rugby teams, but no information has been obtained. Members discussed options for obtaining information on this and agreed that Dr Martin should continue to try to get a response via the Faculty of Sport and Exercise Medicine (FSEM).

[ACTION: Dr Martin]

- 5.5 A first draft of the conclusions of the report and the recommendations is hoped to be available for the next meeting. The Chairman thanked Dr Martin and drew members' attention to the revised style of the report. The Committee would be keen to approve a final draft of the report at the November meeting. The Chairman also drew members' attention to the formal consultation launched by DH on the draft IR(ME)R 2018 regulations, which closes on 31st July 2017.

- 5.6 Members offered suggestions to clarify and strengthen the report. These would be considered by Dr Martin in the next draft.

[ACTION: Dr Martin]

ITEM 6 Any other business

- 6.1 Dr Toledano reminded members that SASHU was strongly supportive of being able to undertake surveillance work around Sellafield and could commence this in the autumn. Other COMARE members had also volunteered to take this forward and Dr Toledano would arrange a teleconference in August with the secretariat and other members to agree a specification of work for SASHU.

[ACTION: Dr Toledano / Secretariat]

- 6.2 The Chairman reminded members that the next meeting will be held on Tuesday 21st November 2017 at Skipton House, London. He closed the meeting at 1.35 pm.