

INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR MEDICAL PHYSICS

PRESS RELEASE



Release date: 27th May 2015

Imaging for Saving Kids - the Inside Story about Patient Safety in Paediatric Radiology

The International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP) includes medical physicists (MPs) from 80 countries. MPs are responsible under International Basic Safety Standards (BSS)¹ for optimization of radiation protection of patients and that implies using only that much radiation as is necessary to get image quality that meets clinical purpose and no more. Imaging children gently and wisely as per Standards is the goal.

The World Health Assembly (WHA) is the supreme decision-making body of the World Health Organisation (WHO) and is held annually in Geneva. The Assembly is attended by delegations from the 194 WHO Member States, the NGOs in official relations with the WHO and representatives from other UN agencies.

The Sixty-eighth session of the WHA took place in Geneva from 18–26 May 2015. On May 26th 2015, four WHO Member States and nine NGOs in official relations with the WHO² co-organised a side event during the 68th WHA entitled “Imaging for Saving Kids - the Inside Story about Patient Safety in Paediatric Radiology”.

This event conducted at the United Nations Office at Geneva (UNOG), brought policymakers, health care providers and patients together to jointly discuss what could be done to improve health and service delivery by maximising the benefits and minimising the risks when using medical imaging in children and how this could be achieved.

Universal health coverage aims to ensure that all people obtain the health services they need without suffering from financial hardship. This outcome requires efficient health systems, suitable health financing approaches, access to essential medicines and technologies, and sufficient capacity of well-trained and motivated health professionals.

Medical imaging enables earlier diagnosis and offers less invasive treatment for sick children. Timely access to basic life-saving procedures, e.g. ultrasound and computed tomography (CT) is important. While resources vary between regions and settings, the stakeholders are improving access to these imaging procedures.

Children are more vulnerable to ionising radiation-related health risks, e.g. x-ray exposure during CT scans. Whenever appropriate, medical imaging without ionising radiation has to be used, e.g. ultrasound or MRI. Good communication with the patient and carers facilitates informed decision-making and minimises procedure delay or refusal due to unfounded concerns. Every procedure should be justified, tailored and optimised.

The stakeholders provided the perspectives of health professionals, patients, families, and health authorities. The current situation in different regions, priorities, and improvement opportunities were discussed.

Improvement in patient safety in paediatric radiology requires multidisciplinary teamwork, collaboration and an integrated framework for actions covering research, advocacy, education, infrastructure, and evidence-informed policy. These actions will help to improve the performance of practitioners, facilities, and healthcare systems. Some examples include: implementing the Radiation Basic Safety Standards (BSS)¹ through national regulations; putting into practice the ten priorities identified in the Bonn call-for-action²; taking into account the

¹ The International Basic Safety Standards (BSS) for Protection against Ionizing Radiation and for the Safety of Radiation Sources is the international benchmark for radiation safety requirements, with major implications for policy and decision making. The BSS edition 2014 is co-sponsored by the European Commission (EC), the Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO), the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the International Labor Organisation (ILO), the Nuclear Energy Agency (NEA/OECD), the Pan American Health Organisation (PAHO), the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and the World Health Organisation (WHO). Available at http://www-pub.iaea.org/MTCD/publications/PDF/Pub1578_web-57265295.pdf

The Bonn call-for-action identified 10 priority actions to improve radiation protection in medicine. Available at http://www.who.int/ionizing_radiation/medical_exposure/bonncallforaction2014.pdf

² Governments of Kenya, Malaysia, Spain, and Uganda; NGOs in official relations with the WHO: Diagnostic Imaging, Healthcare IT and Radiation Therapy Trade Association (DITTA); International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP); International Commission on Radiological Protection (ICRP); International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP); International Society of Radiology (ISR), International Society of Radiographers and Radiological Technologists (ISRR); RAD-AID International;

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ICRP recommendations on radiation protection in medicine; increasing access to imaging procedures; improving appropriate use of paediatric imaging by policies, providing guidance and tools, and ensuring practitioner education and training; and promoting awareness of stakeholders' roles and responsibilities.

It is important to foster an effective dialogue and build partnerships between health authorities, radiation protection regulatory bodies, practitioner organisations, patients, and families. Facility-based and system-wide actions are complementary for the establishment and maintenance of a radiation safety culture in paediatric imaging. Integration avoids duplication and promotes synergy.

IOMP has been using its annual event of International Day of Medical Physics (IDMP) which is celebrated on 7th November each year, as one of the channels to highlight the importance of safety in medical uses of radiation.

Local implementation of a globally developed improvement model can save resources. The WHO has a crucial role in facilitating and coordinating improvement actions in different regions and settings. The IOMP, as one of the affiliated NGOs is committed to improving the access to safe and more appropriate use of paediatric imaging and is working with other stakeholders on this priority. For further information, please visit our website www.iomp.org or contact the Secretary General at sg.iomp@gmail.com.

Issued by: International Organization for Medical Physics

Contact: Madan Rehani, PhD, Secretary General;
sg.iomp@gmail.com