Perspectives from NRDC on Communication of Low-Dose Radiation Risks

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Radiation Risk Communication Challenges

- No direct sensorial relationship with radiation
- Use of the scientific language to communicate
- Images and narratives of Hiroshima-Nagasaki and the Cold War
- Debate among experts on the effects of low levels of radiation, LNT and issues surrounding nuclear energy

- Source: *Jacques Lochard "Lessons learned in communication from the Fukushima accident" (2015).*

Comments on study objectives

- NRDC believes that recent epidemiologic studies support the continued use of the LNT model for radiation protection. LNT is a protective standard that we need to keep in place.

- In my view, the experiments, modeling and simulation that may be a part of the long-term research agenda recommended by this committee would only reinforce the core principle of LNT that we rely on today.

- But like in many areas of public health policy, we need to expand our understanding of low-dose radiation risk to more vulnerable groups.

- NRDC urges the committee not to quantify monetary and health-related impacts of any hypothetical changes to radiation protection standards; where there's a case for more science to be done, map out that research and once these findings are in hand, assess any implications for low-dose regulations.

Risk Communication

- Traditional notion of “risk communication”
  - Risks of concern have been clearly defined by the scientific community and the problem simply remains in communicating them “rightly” to the population
- Risks cannot be properly defined without understanding the “real” concern of the population.
- Update in risk communication:
  - participatory risk assessment where risks are debated by multiple stakeholders and actors including counter-or independent experts and third parties such as NGOs, and
  - risk assessment defined collectively rather than decided single-handedly by policymakers – the authorities and their affiliated experts.
- Source: *Shirabe, Masashi, Christine Fassert, and Reiko Hasegawa. "From ’ Risk Communication’ to Participatory Radiation Risk Assessment." (2018).*

Communicating the risk of radiation

- Engaging affected people in the characterization of their individual radiological situations
- Listening and understanding concerns expressed by affected people
- Engaging stakeholders in radiation measurements
- Proceeding step by step starting from source to effects through exposure pathways and the exposure conditions
- Using as much as possible common language and narratives
- Building trust
- Source: *Jacques Lochard "Lessons learned in communication from the Fukushima accident" (2015).*

Conclusion

- Act in accordance with the ethics of radiological protection
- Be transparent by openly sharing all information and publishing studies in an open literature
- Find effective means of communicating scientific results
- Include all stakeholders in the process, deliberate and decide together

Contact Information

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