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HERCA - Heads of European Radiological protection Competent Authorities

HERCA activities relating to medical applications

For more information about HERCA, please visit our website www.herca.org or contact our Secretariat.
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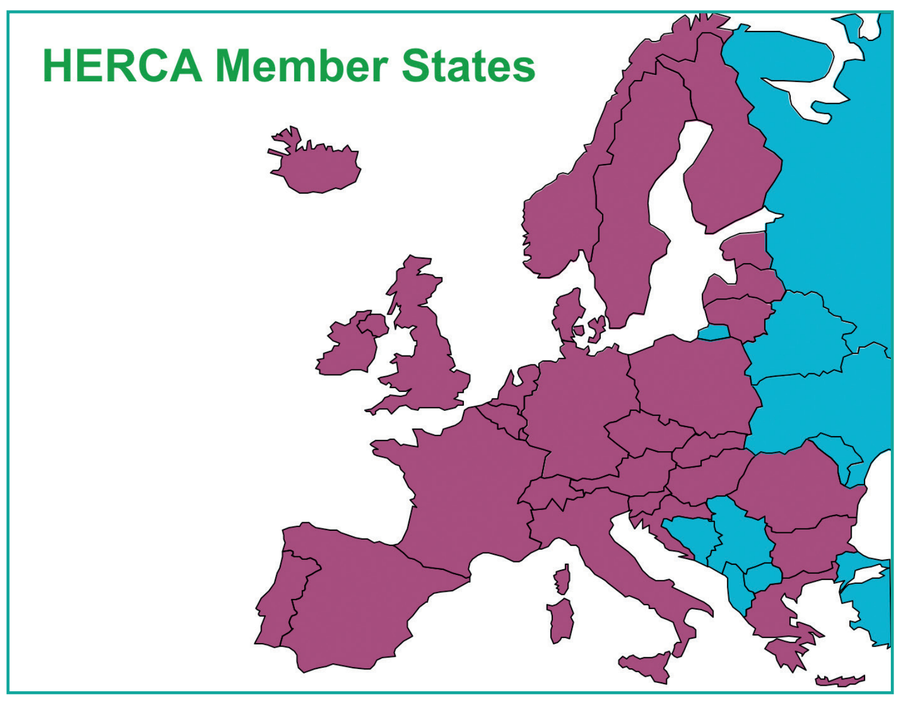
1. HERCA as an Organisation

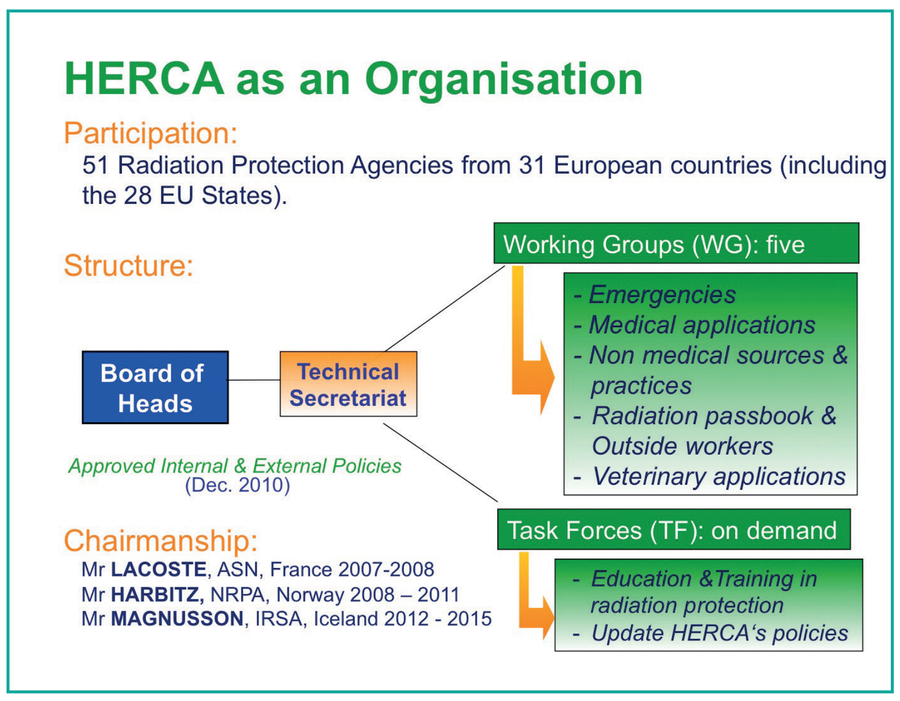
HERCA was founded in 2007 on the initiative of the French *Autorité de sûreté nucléaire* (ASN). It is a voluntary association in which the Heads of Radiation Protection Authorities work together in order to identify common interests in significant regulatory issues and propose practical solutions for these issues. HERCA works on topics generally covered by provisions of the EURATOM Treaty.

The goal of HERCA is to contribute to a high level of radiological protection throughout Europe. In order to achieve this goal, the association will:

- Build and maintain a European network of chief radiation protection regulatory authorities, with the definite wish to involve ALL such regulatory authorities, throughout Europe
- Promote the exchange of ideas and experiences, avoiding unnecessary duplication of work and learning from one another's best practices
- Develop a common approach to radiation protection and the way it is transposed into regulation
- Discuss and, where appropriate, express its consensus opinion on significant regulatory issues.

The uniqueness of HERCA, as compared to other existing networks in radiation protection, is that it is composed of the Heads of the Authorities, people who either have decision-making capacity or can at least have a major influence on policy and decisions within their country.





2. HERCA Working Group on Medical Applications

The HERCA Working Group on Medical Applications (WG MA) covers all radiation protection issues concerning medical applications of ionising radiation for diagnosis and therapy.

The working group organises its activities through Working Packages (WP):

WP Justification

The justification principle is one of the pillars on which radiation protection is based around the globe. The *International Commission on Radiological Protection* (ICRP publication 103 (2007)) distinguishes three levels in the justification of medical exposures:
First level: the use of ionising radiation in medicine is "per se" justifiable,
Second level: a defined radiological procedure must be generically justified in terms of its diagnostic or therapeutic objectives,
Third level: individual justification of a defined radiological procedure.

Up to now, the WPJustification has focused its activities on the third level of justification where the imaging request is tailored to the individual patient's needs.

Actions

- The WP Justification is producing a position paper with regard to justification. This document is being developed with due regard to the triple A approach (Awareness, Appropriateness, Audit). Hereby, a guiding principle is that of the existence of a justification process in which many parties contribute. It is a major objective of this activity to actively involve these parties.
- Concerning the exposure of asymptomatic individuals in healthcare, a 'Position Paper on Screening' was published on the HERCA website. The position paper proposes a clear distinction between officially approved screening programmes and radiological procedures as part of an individual health assessment. The paper highlights specific requirements for the latter.

WP Inspection Competence of Authorities

The WG MA recognised that the regulatory bodies have an important role in ensuring that optimisation is a part of every medical exposure. In addition, there is a specific role with regard to the processes associated with justification and in particular the verification that justification has taken place and by whom. The WP Inspection Competence of Authorities considers both optimisation and justification to be developed as part of an inspector competence work stream.

To do so most effectively, regulatory bodies and their staff need to be aware of developments in the fields they are regulating and inspectors need an up-to-date working knowledge of current radiological practices.

Actions

- The WG MA conducted a first inspection training course in UK in 2013, which will be repeated in 2014.
- Building on the experience of established Nordic Inspection Workshops, the first pan-European Inspection Workshop focusing on justification and optimisation in radiology is under preparation.

WP Stakeholder Involvement: CT Manufacturers

In February 2010, the WG MA - through its WP Stakeholder Involvement: CT Manufacturers (WP CT) - started a dialogue with the four main CT manufacturers (GE, Philips, Siemens and Toshiba) and COCIR, which represents the radiological, electromedical and healthcare IT industry in Europe. As an important result of this process, COCIR and the CT manufacturers were willing to underline their responsibility for patient dose reduction, and by May, 13, 2011 they had made a voluntary commitment to actions which offer the potential to achieve this goal.

Actions

In a close collaboration with COCIR and CT manufacturers, the WP CT

- Closely assists and supports the implementation of the voluntary commitment by COCIR and the CT-manufacturers
- Fosters a joint approach to inform both the public and relevant scientific bodies about the nature and scope of the voluntary commitment.

A further important result of this process was the insight that international cooperation is increasingly important for success, and that this cannot be limited to a European level. To address this issue,

- HERCA - through its WP CT has intensified its cooperation with other international regulatory and scientific bodies such as the FDA and NCRP.

Other activities

With respect to the recent publication of Council Directive 2013/59/Euratom, the WG MA is paying particular consideration to the transposition and implementation of this new Basic Safety Standards Directive.

Actions

The WG MA is in a process to establish a communication platform on the implementation of the new Basic Safety Standards Directive. The first topics to be considered are:

- Reporting on accidental and unintended exposures;
- "Member States shall ensure that … new types of practices involving medical exposure are justified in advance before being generally adopted";
- "Member States shall ensure that … any medical radiological procedure on an asymptomatic individual, to be performed for the early detection of disease, is part of a health screening programme, or requires specific documented justification for that individual by the practitioner, in consultation with the referrer, following guidelines from relevant medical scientific societies and the competent authority."

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