

ESR EuroSafe Imaging campaign launched at ECR 2014 - ESR takes major step towards establishing holistic radiation protection culture in Europe

“We are now facing a worldwide challenge to deal with the risks of radiation in healthcare without compromising the benefits” – WHO expert Dr. Maria del Rosario Perez succinctly summed up the rationale behind the ESR’s EuroSafe Imaging campaign, a new flagship radiation protection initiative, launched at the European Congress of Radiology in Vienna in March.

Over the preceding months and years, it had become clearer and clearer that across Europe there was significant room for reducing unnecessary radiological procedures and utilising the enormous benefits of medical radiation more effectively. Data on the age of imaging equipment demonstrated the necessity to develop plans for inventory audits, maintenance and replacement at the European level. Media stories about the link between exposure to ionising radiation and cancer rates demonstrated a need for better communication with patients, healthcare professionals, as well as the wider public, and US initiatives such as Image Wisely and Image Gently provided successful examples for increasing awareness about radiation protection.

Faced with this situation, and given that improving quality and enhancing patient safety in medical imaging have always been at the heart of all the ESR’s efforts, the ESR decided it was time to, in the words of ESR President, Prof. Guy Frija, stimulate the ‘safety gene’ of radiologists by better communicating the benefits of using up-to-date equipment and of establishing good quality and safety procedures in daily practice. And, with radiation protection having been a subject in ‘splendid isolation’ so far, as ESR Radiation Protection Subcommittee Chairman Prof. Peter Vock observed, the ESR resolved to consolidate its various initiatives and join forces with other stakeholders to foster a truly holistic approach to radiation protection.

What better way to start the EuroSafe Imaging campaign than launching it at ECR 2014? With an official announcement during the opening ceremony, a prominent poster exhibition, a dedicated launch session and extensive media coverage, chances are that none of the thousands of ECR visitors left Vienna without having encountered EuroSafe Imaging in some way.

The Exhibition

Officially opened by the ESR President on the morning of Friday, March 7, the EuroSafe Imaging Exhibition contained more than 40 posters from national radiological societies, subspecialty organisations, international and European Institutions, medical professional associations and industry, detailing their radiation protection activities, initiatives and projects. From the ESR’s own radiation protection projects and examples of national and global approaches to paediatric CT practices to technological advances in imaging equipment, visitors received in-depth information about the state of the art in every aspect of radiation protection. All the posters displayed in the exhibition are available online at www.eurosafeimaging.org, where organisations and individuals can also get involved and sign up to become Friends of EuroSafe Imaging.



Prof. Guy Frija, then ESR president, at the official EuroSafe Exhibition ribbon-cutting ceremony

The Launch Session

The dedicated EuroSafe Imaging Launch Session at ECR brought together 15 distinguished experts under the chairmanship of Prof. Peter Vock and the Secretary-General of the European Society of Paediatric Radiology, Dr. Cathy Owens, both members of the EuroSafe Imaging Steering Committee.

Interviewed about the campaign during the ECR, Prof. Vock explained that radiation protection was a problem common across the globe, and therefore different parts of the world should learn from each other. And indeed, the EuroSafe Imaging session's audience received a first-hand account of the American experiences in promoting awareness of radiation protection as the invited speakers from the US, Dr. James Brink and Prof. Marilyn Goske, presented the Image Wisely and Image Gently campaigns.

Short statements by panellists, including representatives from the IAEA, WHO, European Commission, Patient Organisations, subspecialty and allied medical societies, industry and others, provided challenging ideas and new impetus for the next steps of the campaign. Encouragingly, all stakeholder representatives welcomed the ESR's effort to bring them together within the campaign and reiterated their organisations' support for EuroSafe Imaging's planned outreach, education and information activities.

The Future

Following the very well received launch of EuroSafe Imaging at ECR 2014, what is most important going forward is to translate the interest generated into action. The next priority is putting into practice the ambitious plan of activities that includes lobbying activities to promote the use of up-to-date equipment, the preparation of educational materials and self-

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assessment modules, radiation protection sessions for senior radiologists, and a certification scheme for hospitals.

In this spirit, European Federation of Radiographer Societies President, Prof. Graciano Paulo, a member of the EuroSafe Imaging Steering Committee himself, issued the following call to action to his colleagues: "It's time for Europe to create a new paradigm to develop a patient safety culture, and we need to get from the launch to developing concepts and implementation in the daily practice of the 700 million medical imaging procedures in Europe each year."