

THIRD COORDINATION MEETING OF WHO
COLLABORATING CENTRES IN RADIATION
EMERGENCY MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS AND
ASSISTANCE

Leningrad, 21-24 May 1990

Contents

	Page
Summary Report	2
Annex I - Agenda	6
Annex II - List of participants and observers	8
Annex III - WHO Collaborating Centres for radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance	10
Annex IV - REMPAN - Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network	28
Annex V - Medical aspects of the Goiania accident: an update	34
Annex VI - Accident in El Salvador	38
Annex VII - Public health concerns in the Soviet Union following the Chernobyl accident	48

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SUMMARY REPORT

1. Introduction

WHO is continuing to develop a network of Collaborating Centres for Radiation Emergency Preparedness and Assistance (REMPAN).

The primary purpose of this network is to promote amongst Member States medical preparedness for radiation accidents which lead to acute exposure, and also to provide advice and medical assistance in case of a radiation accident, under the International Convention on Assistance in the case of a Nuclear Accident or Radiological Emergency.

The second task of the network is the study of long-term effects of such accidents.

The network started with three centres in France, USA and the USSR, and increased by Collaborating Centres from Argentina, Australia, Brazil, and Japan to provide a broader worldwide emergency coverage. In this way REMPAN facilitates a coordinated response in radiation emergency involving more than one assisting Centre.

Three Coordination meetings of Existing and Prospective WHO Collaborating Centres on Radiation Emergency, Medical Preparedness and Assistance were held. The first of them took place in Le Vesinet (France) and Southampton (UK) between 30 March and 2 April 1987. The second one was held in Oak Ridge (Tennessee, USA) between 17 and 19 October 1988. The third one was organized in Leningrad (USSR) between 21 and 24 May 1990.

2 Description of the meeting

2.1 The main objectives

The main objectives of the meeting were to:

- exchange information about recent developments in the Centres and their plans;
- prepare a plan for coordinated action in 1990/91;
- produce a report of the meeting with contributions from each participant;
- approve the design of REMPAN and the WHO plan for radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance;
- discuss in detail the experience gained in dealing with the Chernobyl, Goiania and El Salvador accidents;
- discuss concrete proposals on the establishment of an international programme on the health consequences of the Chernobyl accident;
- get acquainted with the WHO Collaborating Centre for Radiation and Medical Pathology in Leningrad.

2.2 Course of the meeting

The agenda is set out in Annex I. Participants (see Annex II) provided updated information about capabilities and experience of their Centres, recent developments and future plans.

It was recognized that the current number of WHO Collaborating Centres which has reached seven is sufficient to make up the REMPAN. However, this does not exclude the possibility that a few more collaborating centres will join REMPAN in the future. A number of national liaison institutions are expected to emerge to support REMPAN at the national level. For example, there are appropriate proposals in Latin America (Chile, Mexico, Peru).

Bearing such features in mind, the meeting updated the depiction of the structure and functions of REMPAN. It was confirmed that REMPAN should be instrumental in supporting the WHO plan for radiation emergency assistance.

Much interest was shown in discussing the valuable experience gained from recent accidents (Goiania, El Salvador and Chernobyl). It should be noted that a considerable contribution to the discussion on the Chernobyl accident was made by a number of Soviet observers (Annex II). Detailed reports were presented on the All-Union register of people affected and on the radiation situation in Byelorussia. A video film was shown on the medical treatment of Chernobyl victims.

A number of reports were presented by staff members of the Central Research Institute for Roentgenology and Radiology which hosted the meeting. These reports gave the idea about the main directions of work at the Institute. The group visited four mobile radiation monitoring laboratories exhibited by the Research Institute for Hygiene in Marine Transportation which belongs to the USSR Ministry of Health.

A draft proposal on the establishment of a WHO International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident was analyzed by the Centre's representatives as well as by their Soviet counterparts. Some amendments of the draft were made. The representatives of the Centres explained their positions with regard to the participation in the programme.

3. The outcome of the meeting

3.1 The meeting contributed significantly to the coordination of the activities and plans of the WHO Collaborating Centres in Argentina, Australia, Brazil, France, Japan, USA and USSR.

3.2 Revised documents were prepared updating the activities of the centres (Annex III). Responsibilities of the centres and avenues whereby their assistance can be obtained were outlined.

3.3 A document was reviewed and revised (Annex IV) describing the activities and responsibilities of the Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network (REMPAN). It was noted that, in addition to its functions on radiation emergency medical preparedness and assistance, REMPAN would benefit from sharing the experience and unique expertise in follow-up studies.

3.4 The group agreed, in general, with the WHO plan for radiation emergency medical assistance (available as a separate paper) which should be tested in practice.

3.5 Responses to the accident at El Salvador (US and Argentina Collaborating Centres) and an update of the Goiania accident (Brazil Collaborating Centre) were presented (Annexes V and VI).

3.6 The WHO Collaborating Centre in Leningrad presented reports of their primary activities: Current activities and prospectives of the Collaborating Centre in Leningrad (A.L. Dudarev); Biodosimetry of radiation effects (V.E. Komar); Late radiation effects (A.S. Yagunov); Population dose assessment in radiodiagnostics (I.A. Ermakov); and Mathematical methods in radiation risk assessment (A.Y. Yakovlev).

3.7 Two reports were given on the health consequences of the Chernobyl accident. The first described the present situation in Byelorussia and the second dealt with preliminary results produced by the All Union Distributed Registry established in Obninsk (Annex VII).

3.8 The accidents of Chernobyl, Goiania and El Salvador have shown the need for well designed follow-up studies. Registries of exposed people should be established as soon as possible. The study cohorts should consist of the exposed groups and controls, and the children of these people (F1 generation). The cause of death should be confirmed by autopsy whenever possible. For those alive, there should be regular medical checkups, ideally at least once a year. The control group should receive the same follow-up. Standardized methods for the medical examinations should be used so that the data will be comparable over the years. Accurate dose estimates for irradiated individuals are needed as soon as possible; other factors that could have influenced exposure and health effects should also be recorded. Details of other features of follow-up studies can be found in Chapter 3 of the document cited in the next paragraph.

3.9 In collaboration with colleagues from the Soviet Union, the group reviewed and recommended some changes to the draft document "International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident" (available as a separate paper) which outlines a broad programme of clinical studies and scientific research to be undertaken under the auspices of the WHO.

3.10 The WHO International Centre in the USSR which was proposed to support the programme should be able to perform long-term follow-up studies. The WHO Collaborating Centres, especially those which are experienced in this aspect, are expected to offer assistance in this regard.

4. Plan of coordinated actions of WHO Collaborating Centres for 1990-1991

4.1 To disseminate information, advice, emergency planning and training materials to relevant institutions in nearby countries.

4.2 To facilitate exchange of staff between Collaborating Centres, taking advantage of existing government to government scientific exchange programmes.

4.3 To provide details on current contingency plans and reports on cases of overexposure and their management.

4.4 To disseminate to relevant institutions in their regions, information on the development and progress of the proposed international WHO programme.

5. Recommendations to WHO

5.1 WHO should take prime responsibility for international activities relating to the medical aspects of radiation accidents.

5.2 WHO should be responsible through its Collaborating Centres for the preparation of international reports on this topic.

5.3 The REMPAN should be further developed through involvement of national liaison institutions supporting REMPAN and, possibly, through designation of two or three more collaborating centres.

5.4 The WHO plan for radiation emergency medical assistance should be supported by clear advice on communication protocols, emergency codes and reporting procedures to be disseminated to the Member States: an exercise on the medical assistance should be carried out to identify deficiencies, if any, in the plan.

5.5 WHO should promote follow-up studies on the effects of radiation accidents taking into account the requirements in para 3.8.

5.6 The revised version of the document "International Programme on the Health Effects of the Chernobyl Accident" should be circulated to the Member States and other relevant institutions.

5.7 The fourth coordination meeting should be convened in February 1992 at the WHO Collaborating Centre in Australia.

6. Acknowledgements

The participants would like to acknowledge the hospitality and support of the Central Research Institute of Roentgenology and Radiology in Leningrad and their appreciation of the opportunity given to them to learn about the whole range of the research work of the Institute through the presentations made by its staff, as well as to visit mobile radiation monitoring facilities of the Research Institute for Hygiene in Marine Transportation.

They would also like to acknowledge the support of the World Health Organization which convened this meeting and express their gratitude to Dr Riaboukhine for his assistance.

THIRD COORDINATION MEETING OF WHO COLLABORATING
CENTRES IN RADIATION EMERGENCY MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS AND ASSISTANCE

LENINGRAD, 21-24 May 1990

Agenda

Monday, 21 May

- 1000-1015 Opening of the meeting (I.S. Riaboukhine)
Greeting on behalf of the Leningrad City Council (A. Sungurov)
Address on behalf of the hosting institution (Director: A. Dudarev)
Election of Chairman and Vice-Chairman
Adoption of the agenda
- 1015-1030 Objectives of the meeting and the layout of its report to be
produced by the participants (I. Riaboukhine)
- 1030-1045 Coffee break
- 1045-1230 Descriptions of the participating WHO Collaborating Centres, their
main results, current activities and plans:
- | | | |
|-------------|---|-----------|
| J. Skvarca | - | Argentina |
| K. Lokan | - | Australia |
| C. Oliveira | - | Brazil |
| P. Pellerin | - | France |
| Y. Hasegawa | - | Japan |
| E. Komarov | - | USSR |
| R. Ricks | - | USA |
- 1230-1400 Lunch
- 1400-1420 Main features of the REMPAN and the WHO plan for radiation
emergency medical assistance (I. Riaboukhine)
- 1420-1530 Discussion on the design of REMPAN and the WHO plan
- 1530-1545 Coffee break
- Recent radiation accidents:
- 1545-1605 1. El Salvador
- legislative, managerial and technological aspects (C. Borrás)
- 1605-1625 - medical aspects (R. Ricks)
- 1625-1700 2. Other radiation accidents since the 2nd Coordination meeting

Tuesday, 22 May

- 0900-1230 Presentations by the Central Research Institute for Roentgenology and Radiology (WHO Collaborating Centre for Medical Radiation Pathology)
- 1230-1400 Lunch
- Follow-up studies of accidents:
- 1400-1430 1. Lessons of the Goiânia accident and the follow-up of exposed persons (C. Nogueira de Oliveira)
- 1430-1515 2. Public health concerns in the contaminated areas and the medical follow-up after the Chernobyl accident
- 1515-1530 Coffee break
- 1530-1800 Discussion on a Soviet proposal for the "International Programme on the Health Consequences of the Chernobyl Accident" and possible participation of WHO and its Collaborating Centres

Wednesday, 23 May

- 0900-1700 Continuation of the discussion and identification of topics of interest in the International Programme for WHO and its Collaborating Centres
- with breaks for lunch and coffee
- 1700-1900 Soviet videofilms on the medical handling of Chernobyl victims

Thursday, 24 May

- 0900-0930 Breaking into two working subgroups to produce the report of the meeting; nomination of rapporteurs
- 0930-1030 Work on the report in the subgroups;
1) WHO emergency plan and REMPAN
2) Follow-up studies after accidents
- 1030-1045 Coffee break
- 1045-1230 Reports of rapporteurs on the progress in their subgroups
- 1230-1400 Lunch
- 1400-1700 Preparation of the draft of the report with recommendations
- 1715 Closure of the meeting

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CENTRES IN RADIATION EMERGENCY MEDICAL PREPAREDNESS AND ASSISTANCE

Leningrad, 21-24 May 1990

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