

Social Values in Stakeholder Communication: How to communicate about ionizing radiation?

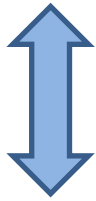
Tanja Perko,

Coordinator of the EAGLE project and
task member of the OPERRA

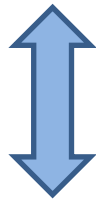
SCK•CEN

<http://eagle.sckcen.be>

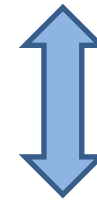
Connecting two FP7 projects



Connecting two FP7 projects (selected) Goals



Recommendation
for future research on risk
communication/perception and
integration of these issues in training and
education.



Guidance tools
for good practice to support the ideal of a
participative, citizen-centred
communication.

Improve risk communication/governance

Risk communication

Supports the stakeholders to make informed decisions and to establish two-way communication and joint problem solving.

- It involves communities
- It protects vulnerable groups
- It serves the public interest (health)

Citizen-centred communication

Risk communication

Supports the stakeholders to make informed decisions and to establish two-way communication and joint problem solving.

- It involves communities
- It protects vulnerable groups
- It serves the public interest (health)

Citizen-centred communication

Challenging

Project Finding: Industry, experts', authorities views

The general public should be 'educated' by
'explaining them the facts'
and by assisting people to 'better understand' nuclear
technology.



“Let's educate emotional and radio-phobic people.”

Example

Home

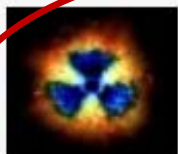
Charter & Mission

Contact Us

Join S.A.R.I.

Members »

MISSION:



To help prevent unnecessary, radiation-phobia-related deaths,

morbidity, patient's refusal of medical imaging, dissuading the study of low-dose radiation therapies, and injuries associated with nuclear/radiological emergencies through countering phobia-promoting misinformation spread by alarmists via the news and

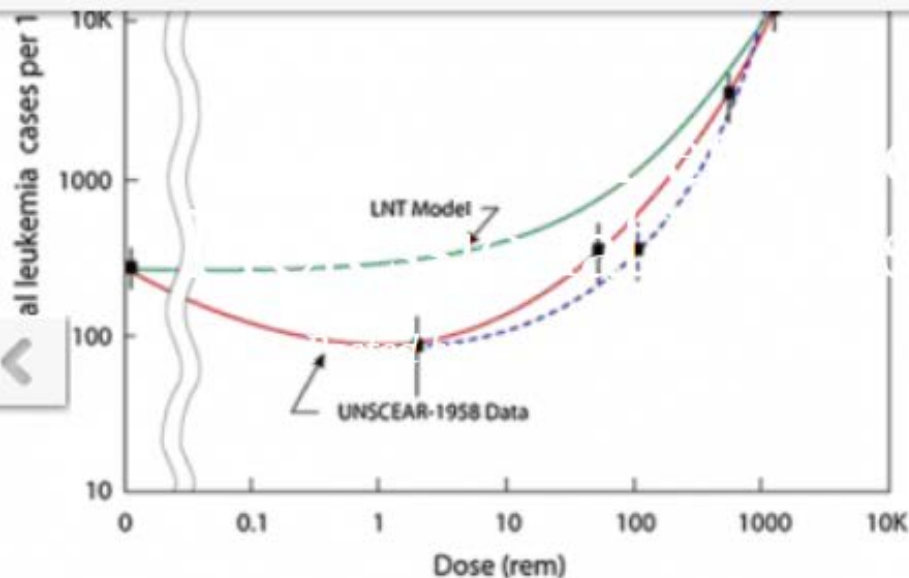


Fig. 1 Leukemia incidence in the Hiroshima survivors, 1950–1957 (Cuttler 2014). Dashed blue line through 100 rem dose addresses footnote for 50 rem dose in UNSCEAR 1958 “that almost all cases

Source: <http://radiationeffects.org/>

Project Finding: Citizens' view

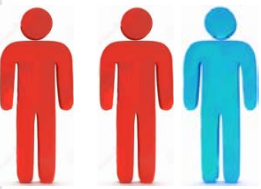
Citizens miss the recognition by an industry, research and authorities of being a competent stakeholder.

They miss an empathy.



Communication is still too much seen as a one-directional transfer of information from a source to a receiver.

Challenge: Low knowledge about ionising radiation



“Natural radioactivity is never dangerous because we are used and adapted to it.”



“Vegetables grown near a nuclear power plant cannot be safely consumed because of radioactivity.”

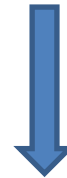
Project Findings:

Media Actors' View

- Communication by authorities is often driven by interest and they are often concealing or holding back the truth.
- It is a challenge to find neutral/reliable sources willing to provide information.



“Scientists need time to formulate answers and authorities take a long time to organize an official message. However, anti-nuclear groups in time of crisis do not face such constraints and are therefore much faster in forming and voicing their message.”



- Journalists are very reluctant to communicate with representatives of public relations. They appeal for experts to be trained for media communication.

Example

Public Relation vs. Media framing

Source: PR- operator

Sellafield site operating at reduced manning levels.

As a result of a conservative and prudent decision, we have reduced manning levels today.

This follows the detection of elevated levels of radiation at the north end of the site.

Essential workers only are being asked to report to work.

Levels of radioactivity detected are above natural background levels but would not call for any actions to be taken by the wider public.

The site is at normal status and employees are working. Investigations continue. All our facilities have been checked and are operating normally.

We have taken this decision to focus on investigating the issue as traffic disruption in the West Cumbria region.

If this had happened during the working day we would have closed the site. There is no risk to the general public or workforce.

We will continue to issue updates via our website.

Source: BBC

Sellafield partly closed after 'above normal' radiation



A perimeter alarm detected "elevated" radioactivity

The Sellafield nuclear reprocessing plant in Cumbria is partially closed after "elevated levels of radioactivity" were detected.

Each building was checked after a perimeter alarm was triggered at the north of the site.

The company later said it was naturally occurring background radiation and not attributable to any issue or problem with any operation on site.

A spokesman stressed there was no risk to the public or workforce.

He added: "There can be no guessing on nuclear sites".

Rory O'Neill, director of stakeholder relations, said: "One of the 20-odd site perimeter monitors that we have is registering above normal levels of radiation.

"It's not a level that would trigger any kind of activity on or off site. It's

Related Stories

Sellafield £700,000 fine upheld

Sellafield waste firm keeps contract

'Huge challenge' of decommissioning

Challenge

Framing the probability

You have a 97% chance of survival.

Challenge

Framing the probability

You have a 97% chance of survival.

You have a 3% chance of dying.

Example:

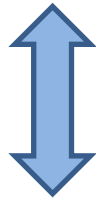
Expert communication in the media

- **SPIEGEL:** The government of the Fukushima prefecture has invited you to inform people in the affected region about radiation risks. Right at the beginning, you said: "The effects of radiation do not come to people who are happy and laughing, they come to people who are weak-spirited." What did you mean by that?
- **Yamashita:** That was on March 20 during the first meeting. I was really shocked. The people were so serious, nobody laughed at all.
- **SPIEGEL:** These people's villages and home towns are contaminated. Nobody knows about the invisible dangers. What did you expect?
- **Yamashita:** The mood of the people was really depressed. From animal experiments with rats we clearly know that animals who are very susceptible to stress will be more affected by radiation. Stress is not good at all for people who are subjected to radiation. Besides, mental-state stress also suppresses the immune system and therefore may promote some cancer and non-cancer diseases. That is why I told people that they also have to relax.

Example: Information campaigns



Question to the ethics community



How to continue?