
Appendix C

ACERER

Issues

Contents: This section provides a list of recommendations made by the Advisory Committee on Energy-Related Epidemiologic Research and the status of the Department of Health and Human Services' response to those recommendations. (Note: The charter for this committee has expired and it no longer exists.)

In the fall of 1998, the Advisory Committee on Energy-Related Epidemiologic Research (ACERER) provided a set of formal recommendations to Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) concerning its research into the occupational and public health consequences of the nation's nuclear weapons production and testing activities. These recommendations (and the status of our response actions) are as follows (ACERER 1998)¹:

◆ **“Fulfill the legislative intent of Public Law 97-414.”**

The NCI (NIH 2000) has recently updated the Radioepidemiological Tables that were published in 1985 (NIH 1985). This revision required developing risk models for more than 20 specific cancers, including those organs and tissues that are of interest following exposures to radioactive fallout. Although the tables are being developed to estimate the “probability of causation” (the probability that a cancer that has been diagnosed in an individual is the result of some previous exposure to radiation), the models could be used to estimate the lifetime risk of developing cancer, which is a more useful quantity for those exposed to fallout and who as yet have no observable health effects. Additionally, the NCI is developing the ¹³¹I/NTS Communications Plan, which will provide the American public and the nation's health care providers with accurate, yet understandable, information regarding the potential risks of thyroid disease associated with exposure to ¹³¹I released during nuclear bomb tests in the 1950s and 1960s at the NTS.

◆ **“Complete a comprehensive dose reconstruction project for NTS fallout.”**

This feasibility report provides DHHS's initial work to provide dose estimates beyond ¹³¹I to include all of the biologically significant radionuclides from NTS and

¹ Advisory Committee for Energy-Related Epidemiologic Research (ACERER), (1998). Resolution containing six recommendations concerning the Department of Health and Human Service's Follow-up to the NCI study, October, 1998.

global testing. The options for future work discussed in Chapter 6 address this ACERER recommendation.

◆ **“Notify Americans of the factors that might help them to determine whether they received significant radiation doses from NTS fallout.”**

NCI has taken the lead in communicating information to people exposed to ¹³¹I fallout from the Nevada Test Site as well as the potential health implications of these exposures. The communications plan developed by NCI for the ¹³¹I/NTS Communications Campaign may prove to be a useful model for communicating information about exposure and risk from *other* radionuclides from NTS as well as global fallout. If a detailed study is conducted and sufficient resources are provided, a comprehensive, nationwide public awareness and provider education campaign could be implemented.

◆ **“Create a public and health care provider information service on NTS exposures and resulting public health concerns.”**

A major component of the communications and education approach discussed in this feasibility report calls for the development of education strategies, plans and resources to guide health care practitioners through patient education, diagnosis, treatment, and the surveillance of illness in persons exposed to radioactive fallout. This report also discusses the need to explore and evaluate existing inconsistent health care recommendations and guidelines in order to develop consistent messages for health care providers. Also, the establishment of a national resource center to provide information and education to both concerned public and health care providers is outlined as a potential mechanism for addressing the public’s needs and concerns.

◆ **“Support archival projects to document experiences of exposed peoples.”**

CDC agrees with ACERER that the citizen input they have received throughout their energy-related work at nuclear weapons production sites can provide helpful information on records recovery, past exposures and exposure pathways. In the communications and education approach presented in this feasibility report, archival projects are discussed as a useful source to not only measure the level of public awareness, concern, and familiarity with the issues, but also as potential partners during the planning and implementation phases of a communications effort to assist in defining target audiences and disseminating information. If additional fallout-related work is funded, it may be possible to assist national, regional and local efforts devoted to recording and preserving the histories of peoples exposed to radiation from nuclear testing and nuclear weapons materials production. It would be important to identify and protect existing data archives (such as, historical reports, monitoring data, institutional memories, etc.) in order to facilitate any future scientific work.

◆ **“Further evaluate screening opportunities for thyroid cancer. It is urgent, in the meantime, to evaluate the advisability and feasibility of screening for other (noncancerous) thyroid and parathyroid diseases, with a priority to evaluate this service for those at highest risk due to their exposures.”**

ACERER, with planning and logistical support from NCI and CDC, held a discussion of screening issues with invited experts on June 8, 2000. This is a very complex public health issue that has been considered by the Institute of Medicine and others. Though ACERER has not made formal recommendations to DHHS regarding targeted screening of higher exposure groups, DHHS has been proactive in investigating current thyroid screening recommendations by groups such as the Preventive Services Task Force and the American Thyroid Association. Additionally, it has explored existing coverage of thyroid disease screening procedures by programs under its purview, such as Medicare and the Indian Health Service.

Since ACERER first submitted these recommendations to DHHS, they have been updated on the progress of NCI and CDC on both the ¹³¹I/NTS Communications Project and the work being conducted to complete this feasibility report. Specifically, ACERER and other members of the public have been able to review and provide advice and comment on:

- ◆ The agenda and draft materials for the ¹³¹I/NTS Communications Project January 2000 Workshop;
- ◆ The outline of the ¹³¹I /NCI Communications Plan;
- ◆ Monthly progress reports on the Communications Project's activities;
- ◆ Progress reports on CDC and NCI's work to examine the scientific feasibility of estimating the doses and potential risks to the American public resulting from other radionuclide exposure from NTS fallout and global nuclear weapons testing and the subsequent nationwide communication of this research; and
- ◆ They will be provided a draft copy of this feasibility report and they will have an opportunity to comment.

The agencies and DHHS will continue to work with their advisory committee as work progresses on these fallout-related projects.

References

- NIH. National Institutes of Health. NIH Publication No. 85-2748. Report of the National Institutes of Health Ad Hoc Working Group to develop radioepidemiological tables. Bethesda, MD; 1985.
- NIH. National Institutes of Health. Draft report of the NCI-CDC working group to revise the 1985 NIH radioepidemiological tables. Bethesda, MD; 2000.