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News Release

Researchers Share Latest Radiation Effects Findings with Military Medical Community

BETHESDA, Md. — Internationally recognized radiobiology experts shared their latest research findings with an audience of more than 60 at the Armed Forces Radiobiology Research Institute (AFRRI) annual Medical Effects of Ionizing Radiation (MEIR) Scientific Course.

“The five-day course focused on the latest research about the medical effects of ionizing radiation to help clinicians, health physicists, and medical planners preserve troop health in the face of radiological/nuclear terrorism or warfare,” said MEIR Course Director Col L. Andrew Huff, USAF, MC, SFS.

The 23 presenters were from 13 civilian and federal U.S. academic, research, and emergency response organizations as well as from the World Health Organization’s Radiation Emergency Medical Preparedness and Assistance Network and from the joint Japan-U.S. Radiation Effects Research Foundation. Attendees represented the U.S. Army, Navy, Air Force, and Public Health Service as well as the Canadian and the United Kingdom military organizations.

Speakers addressed topics that included assessments of the current worldwide nuclear and radiological threat, emergency response practices, medical treatment protocols, and findings from long-term studies of radiation exposures including those in Hiroshima and Nagasaki in 1945 and Chernobyl in 1986. Research updates included radiation dose assessment methods, development of radioprotectants, radiation countermeasure development strategies, and cancer risk in radiation-exposed populations.

In addition to this 5-day course, AFRRI conducts the standard 2.5-day MEIR Course in 12 to 18 venues each year primarily for military medical providers at military bases in the United States and abroad. “These postgraduate-level training courses,” said Huff, “enhance Department of Defense preparedness for nuclear/radiological disaster both for maintaining military readiness and assisting when needed in support of civilian authorities in a federal response.”

AFRRI, located on the grounds of the National Naval Medical Center in Bethesda, is a Department of Defense research laboratory and a component of the Uniformed Services University of the Health Sciences under the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Health Affairs.

Learning to Care for Those in Harm's Way

USU is the nation's federal school of medicine and graduate school of nursing. The university educates health care professionals dedicated to career service in the Department of Defense and the U.S. Public Health Service. Students are active-duty uniformed officers in the Army, Navy, Air Force and Public Health Service, who are being educated to deal with wartime casualties, national disasters, emerging infectious diseases, and other public health emergencies. Of the university's more than 4,000 physician alumni, the vast majority serve on active duty and are supporting operations in Iraq, Afghanistan, and elsewhere, offering their leadership and expertise.

For more information, contact the Office of External Affairs at 301-295-1219.

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