

Notification of Event: International Event

Facility: National Oncologic Institute (ION)
Panama

Event Date: August-Dec. 2000

MULTIPLE MEDICAL MISADMINISTRATIONS

Patients receiving radiation treatments for cancer in Panama received 20% - 100% above the prescribed dose

Information on this incident has been obtained from several translated articles published in *La Prensa* (<http://www.prensa.com/hoy/portada.shtml>), a Spanish language Newspaper in Panama, between May 18-24, 2001.

Description of circumstances:

At a press conference on May 18, 2001, Doctors from the National Oncologic Institute (ION) in Panama announced that 28 patients treated for colon, prostate, and cervical cancer may have received radiation doses of 20% to 100% above what was prescribed. The 28 patients had been treated at the ION between August and December of last year, but the additional doses were not confirmed until March of this year. The cause of the overdose is under investigation by the ION. A five member team from the IAEA has been formed to provide assistance with the incident investigation. The preliminary investigation indicates the treatment planning system may have been a cause or contributing factor of the over-exposures.

The over-exposures are suspected to have contributed to the deaths of 8 of the 28 affected patients. The NRC is preparing an urgent information notice to issued shortly.

From a May 24, 2001, article in *La Prensa*:

- Ⓒ The device was confirmed to be a Cobalt-60 teletherapy unit. The article did not specify the manufacturer and model number of the device.



- Ⓒ The article contained a picture of the device (see above). From this picture, the unit appears to be one of the Theratron Series model teletherapy units manufactured by MDS Nordion in Canada (formerly Theratronics International, formerly AECL). These units are registered under NRC SSD certificate NR-0220-D-117-S.
- Ⓒ The article indicated that the Multidata company was the supplier of the treatment planning program.

- C An IAEA investigation team has been formed. The team includes Dr. Fred Mettler, from the department of Radiology at the University of New Mexico; Jean–Marc Cosset, from the department of Radiotherapy at the Curie Institute in France; Patrick Gourmelon, from the Institute for Nuclear Protection at Fontenay; Stanislav Vatnifsky from the Dosimetry and Medical Radiation section at the IAEA; and Pedro Ortiz López, also from the IAEA.
- C Officials from the Panama Ministry of Health (MINSa) have inspected the teletherapy unit and treatment planning system, and have determined that it is functioning properly. Treatments with the unit have been allowed to resume.
- C An information “hot-line” has been set up for people with concerns about the treatments or the patients being treated for cancer.