

XVII TRAINING WORKSHOP ON RADIATION EMERGENCY PREPAREDNESS FOR MEDICAL OFFICERS : A REPORT

The XVII Training Workshop on Planning, Preparedness and Response to Radiation Emergencies for Medical Officers, was held under the aegis of Local Working Committee for Radiation Emergency Medical Response (REMR) of BARC, at Niyamak Bhavan, AERB from 9th Oct. – 12th Oct. 2007 and was inaugurated by Dr. K.B. Sainis, Director, Bio-Medical Group, BARC.

Dr. P.R. Bongirwar, Medical Officer-in-Charge of Trombay Dispensary and Chief coordinator of the workshop, welcomed the distinguished invitees, guests and delegates and briefly apprised them about the genesis of the training course. He said that during the course of the training workshop, all medical aspects and other relevant aspects of radiation injuries/emergencies would be comprehensively covered by various faculty members from BARC, DAE & AERB. The total number of delegates registered for the workshop were 49 and included multi-disciplinary specialists from Mumbai's four major teaching hospitals, doctors from Armed Forces Medical Units and Medical Officers from different constituent units of DAE.

Dr. V. Karira, Head, Medical Division and Chairman of the Local Working Committee of Radiation Emergency Medical Response (REMR) greeted the delegates and said in his introductory address that DAE has been identified as the nodal agency by the Govt. of India for advice on management of nuclear/radiological emergencies, occurring in the public domain. He further added that this training workshop which was training of trainers is being conducted with the objective that Medical Officers who would be trained in this workshop, in turn would train other medical and

para-medical personnel, at their respective work places. He further said that the expansion of nuclear power programme in the future and increasing use of radiation in various fields, had further increased the necessity for doctors, to be aware about management of radiation injuries, should they ever occur. He added that this course was particularly important in view of the fact that the present medical curriculum does not cover various aspects of diagnosis and management of radiation injuries and hence the vital need for conducting this workshop to bring awareness among the medical fraternity.

Dr. K.B. Sainis, Director, Bio-Medical Grp. in his inaugural address said that India is one of the few countries in the world which has mastered both the front- end as well as the back-end nuclear fuel cycle technology and is presently pursuing a three-stage nuclear power programme. He also said that this programme would undergo further expansion in the years to come. According to him, this training of trainers workshop would have a multiplier effect and this was particularly important because of rapid expansion of use of radiation technology in diverse fields such as Medicine, Agriculture, industry and in research. He then added that undue fear among the public regarding radiation, needed to be allayed as many health effects occur at high dosages and were dose-dependent. He emphasized the fact that the AERB was a national regulatory agency, which follows internationally prescribed limits, for radiation protection and ensures strict compliance in maintenance of safety.

He gave a brief overview of biological effects of ionizing radiation and said that no hereditary effects

had been observed, in the children of atomic bomb survivors of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. He outlined the role of UNSCEAR in analyzing data related to human radiation exposure and drawing conclusions about the radiation risk. He also spoke on the role of therapies like bone marrow transplant and the use of stem cells in the treatment of radiation injuries.

The training workshop spanning a period of four days, comprehensively covered all topics pertaining to radiation injuries/emergencies including assessment of psychological impact of radiation accidents and an overview of overall preparedness in dealing with management of radiation emergencies. It also included visit of delegates to BARC facilities viz. Emergency Response Centre, Personnel Decontamination Centre and Dhruva reactor and a one day visit was also arranged to the Radiation Medicine Centre and the Tata Memorial Hospital.

Dr. K.B. Sainis presided over the valedictory function which was held on October 12, 2007. Dr. H. M. Haldavnekar welcomed the chief guest and invitees. Dr. P.R. Bongirwar gave a brief summary of the training workshop which included written feedback from the participant delegates. In his valedictory address Dr. Sainis referred to a few radiation accidents and said that this was the 50th year of the Windscale accident at Cumbria in UK (Oct. 1957). He also drew attention of the delegates to the potentiality of a scenario, in which there could be malevolent use of radioactive sources in the public domain. He emphasized the importance of this training workshop as one of the crucial requirements as envisaged by the recently established National Disaster Management Authority (NDMA). He later distributed certificates of participation to the attending delegates. Dr. (Mrs.) A.A. Godse proposed a vote of thanks on behalf of the Local Working Committee. REMR, BARC.



At the valedictory function : left to right Dr. P.R. Bongirwar, Medical Officer-in-charge, Trombay Dispensary, Dr. V. Karira, Head, MD, Dr. K.B. Sainis, Director, BMG and Dr. K. Muralidhar, Secretary, AEC/CAC & Head, MSG