



Non-Ionizing Radiation & Children's Health

International Joint Workshop
18 - 20 May 2011, Ljubljana, Slovenia

PLATFORM PRESENTATION ☒

Emf Recommendations Specific For Children?

Christiane PÖLZL

Federal Office For Radiation Protection, Munich, Germany

When discussing health risks for children due to electromagnetic fields it has to be considered how to best translate the scientific knowledge into adequate protection and precautionary measures of the general public and furthermore into specific recommendations for children.

There are several possibilities for protection, precautionary measures and for formulating recommendations. All of them address different starting points for modifying behaviour, e.g. regulatory frameworks aim at restricting limit values or controlling individual behaviour without necessarily generating a person's understanding of the deeper understanding of the measure. Primary prevention aims at influencing health related attitudes and behaviour by means of information about health affecting behaviour, health risk factors, and health promoting possibilities. Secondary prevention comprises measures that aim at early detection and insofar early treatment of diseases.

Children have to be treated differently than adults in addressing their ability and willingness to modify behaviour and their competence to comprehend cognitively the sense of behavioural recommendations. Research has shown that adults can be motivated to adjust their own behaviour in order to protect their children or to be role models for their children. Hence one way to modify children's behaviour is to address the parents and care persons. Generally education in the family, the social environment and in peer groups, nursery school and at school play an important role in forming and influencing individual behaviour. A distinction has to be made between recommendations that aim at limiting exposure and insofar address producer of EMF sources, and recommendations that address societal or individual behaviour. The age of the target group has also to be taken into consideration.

An important question is how to deal with scientific uncertainties when expressing EMF recommendations for children. Accentuating scientific uncertainties can under certain circumstances raise risk awareness. This can be an intended effect. But the expression of scientific uncertainties can also lead to unintended consequences in parent's behaviour or even senseless dealing with the respective EMF source.

The presentation will show, in which part of the EMF spectrum scientific findings state reasons for specific recommendations for children, what kind of recommendations are practicable and effective and how these recommendations can be designed.

Information about approaches to EMF recommendations for children in different countries will be provided. The handling of regulatory frameworks, behavioural appeals to children themselves and their parents or teachers, educational programmes and empowerment strategies as well as the relevance in public health issues etc. will be discussed. Experiences, lessons learned and impact for future EMF recommendations specific for children will be provided.