



Non-Ionizing Radiation & Children's Health

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

POSTER

PLATFORM PRESENTATION

Criteria For Judging Advice From Advisory Bodies

Peter WIEDEMANN

Kit, Berlin, Germany

While there are recommendations and guidelines for scientists how to summarize scientific studies accurately and reliably, there is a lack of knowledge about how to communicate these assessments in way that helps the general public and policy makers to understand a risk assessment. However, science does not belong longer only to scientists. Science disputes, especially about risks, can turn into public and political controversies. Sometimes, they cause public anger and outrage. What is the best way of dealing with this situation? Experts in risk communication and risk governance have proposed various answers: (1) to raise public understanding of science, (2) to facilitate public participation, (3) to create a positive image of science, and (4) to strengthen public trust in science. In reality, each of these strategies might encounter hurdles and barriers: on the side of the scientists it might be poor communication and ignorance of the societal demands; on the side of the public we are confronted with motivated scepticism, low risk literacy, and high affective arousal. The situation becomes worth when the risk issues are complex and science is divided into adversarial camps. In this situation, it is not unusual that the public receives both warning and reassuring messages. Under these circumstances several questions arise: How to communicate quality and integrity of science? What belongs in a plain language summary of a risk assessment? Which features of research processes should be disclosed in order to strengthen confidence? It is only recently that science communication has begun to look for answers to these questions. The paper discusses the available research on how to report risk assessments in the framework of dual process theories. It focuses on the CORA framework, developed in the context of COST BM 0704 that intends to give risk assessments a "personal" face. The CORA framework consists of seven sections. For each section information should be disclosed in order to enable an informed judgement about the trustworthiness of the assessment: (1) General information on document evaluated, scope of the report, and organisational background information, (2) Information on the membership and expertise in group, (3) Documentation of measures for guaranteeing openness and impartiality, (4) Description of the risk assessment process, (5) Description of the public consultation activities, (6) Provision of details of the risk evaluation process (7) Information on communication activities. Empirical data about the usefulness of this framework are provided and the benefits and limitations of CORA are discussed.