ICNIRP/EMF-NET/WHO Workshop on Current Trends in Health and Safety Risk Assessment of Work Related Exposure to EMFs **SESSION 4**

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Developing a Strategy to Evaluate and Manage Occupational Exposures to RF-EMF

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Occupational exposures to radiofrequency (RF) fields are created by a wide variety of sources, including ones that are very weak and ones that have a significant possibility of causing workers to be exposed above recommended exposure limits. In European Union countries, EC Directive 2004/40/EC requires measurements of such RF exposures, but in many other countries, no such requirement exists. Yet in either situation, whether exposure measurement is mandated by a legal directive or not, workers and managers have a need to understand the risk of exposure to RF fields that are specific to their workplace. Exposure measurement is a key part, but only one part of an overall strategy to evaluate and manage such workplace exposures. A strategy should be developed that is customized for each unique workplace situation. Such a plan can help put into perspective the relative risks of RF exposure, even in the face of uncertainty in the science of risk assessment of the potential health effects of RF exposure. This presentation will consider a rationale for, and components of such a strategy for evaluating and managing RF exposure.

A number of national and international organizations have published EMF exposure management plans, but experts in the assessment of RF exposures have found that many workplaces lack any kind of systematic plan for dealing with the RF sources found in that setting. In the absence of an overall plan, measurements alone will not be sufficient to protect workers from potential health effects of RF exposure. The basic elements of such a plan include (1) definition of responsibilities, authorities and administrative plan, (2) exposure assessment, (3) exposure controls, (4) medical surveillance, (5) worker training, and (6) plan review. A well-defined and well-executed plan can provide valuable information about RF exposures with the most efficient use of resources by identifying the RF sources and work practices that present the greatest likelihood of overexposure, by considering cost-effective means of preventing overexposure, and by effectively dealing with any overexposures that may occur.

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ABSTRACT