Risk Communication Case Study

During Normal Operations

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1. Context (1)

A steering committee, CODIRPA, for the management of the post-accident phase of a nuclear accident was initiated in 2005 by ASN:

- Pluralistic structure: local and domestic administrations, institutional technical experts, operators, elected representatives, associations, local information commissions, representatives of foreign radiation protection authorities, etc.
- Thematic working groups: waste, health, etc.

3 main objectives:

- Protecting populations from the dangers of ionising radiations
- Providing support to the population suffering from consequences of the accident
- Reconquering affected territories, from the economic and social standpoints

→ Publication, in 2012, of the first elements of a national doctrine for post-accident management

1. Context (2)

• Information and communication related to large-scale accidents is a key issue. It is evidenced by feedback experience and persistent controversy about the impact of Chernobyl fallout in France.

• A post-accident situation management doctrine (CODIRPA) has been developed in France.

⇒ one aim is providing information about post accident management (without questioning use of nuclear energy) to stakeholders:
  - Population affected by the accident
  - Institutional experts and authorities
  - Health professionals

This is an interim report since the work is not completed.
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2. Who are stakeholders?
   • All health professionals: physicians (family doctors, paediatricians, psychiatrists...), nurses, pharmacists, veterinarians, ...
   • Why health professionals?
     - Key position in crisis information centres
     - Proximity in day-to-day life / besides, they are also citizens
       → possible source of information for population
       → credibility, trustworthiness

Objective: enables them to best respond to their patients and manage the health crisis

3. Methodology (1)
   • Implication of various groups of experts (+ associations)
   • Iterative process, with the objective to achieve consensus
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3. Methodology (2)

1- A local group of representative health professionals in charge of identifying questions

2- Institutional experts and authorities in charge of providing elements of response

3- A pluralist group of experts (national and local) in charge of consolidation of answers / experts hearing as needed

4- Back to the local group to verify if the document produced meets their expectations

5- Critical review, finalisation
   New loop (4 + 5) if relevant

6- Checking test with a second panel of local health professionals not involved in the first process

7- Presentation of the finalised version to the CODIRPA Steering Committee
3. Methodology (3)

Meetings:
- local group of health professionals ($)
- pluralistic expert group ($)
- local group and some members of expert group ($)

E-mail exchanges:
- to obtain elements of response
- to prepare meetings
- to inform groups members who could not participate to the meetings
- to consult a second panel of local health professionals
4. Tools used for communication

• Local health professionals identified about 200 questions on very different items: health effects, contamination (food, environment, professional offices, ...), good practices ...

• The text of the replies (to-date 140 about) was drafted to answer directly and concisely to questions, then provide explanation and additional information

• The terminology used was adapted to health professionals, with scientific arguments but simple wording

• Links to other documents and internet sites are provided in case health professionals would like enlarging their knowledge
5. Key messages

- No question about use of nuclear energy
- Need for clear and concise answers, consistent with each other
- Large scope of issues addressed and data provided, beyond the initial training of health professionals, to enable them feeling well prepared
- Iterative process within the groups and between the groups:
  - Building capacity for each side
  - Possibility to identify discrepancies and resolve them
  - Mutual respect
- Need for an introductory chapter providing basic information: quantities and units, health effects, order of magnitude of exposure levels, consequences of Chernobyl and Fukushima accidents…
6. Implementation challenges

• "Peace time" mobilization of civil society stakeholders requires that they decide to spend time and, for some, income on the project, despite busy schedule and little awareness that an accident could happen

• Balance between scientific vs plain language in the answers (main audience = health professionals / second audience = their patients)

• Dissemination of the gathered knowledge: website, workshops, professional journals?

• How to arouse interest "in peace time" about the document produced?
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7. Resources required

- **Human resources**
  - **Before**
  - to carefully prepare work before soliciting local professionals
  - to convince people to get involved in this WG
  - **During**
  - to participate to meetings
  - to analyse the documents produced
  - **After**
  - to contribute to dissemination of the final document produced

- **Financial resources**
  - to cover travel expenses of association members for the expert group meetings

- **Technological resources to compile, organise and circulate data**
  - Development of a database with a powerful search engine
  - Creation of website dedicated to post-accident
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8. Outcomes/ Feedback from stakeholders
   • Globally speaking, the answers to the first 142 questions met the expectations of health professionals
   • Providing basic concepts helps them to understand well the topic
   • The discrepancies between experts were both disturbing and beneficial

9. Lessons learnt
   • The strong commitment of a local ferryman is crucial to mobilise stakeholders
   • The strong involvement of all is needed in all steps of the project
   • The civil society, in particular anti-nuclear associations, is difficult to mobilise (accident preparedness may be seen as acceptance)
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10. Perspectives for CODIRPA

- Delimitation of non consumption zone
- Measurement of environmental contamination
- Marketing strategy for manufactured products
- Additional risk associated with increased radioactive background for workers
- Waste management
- Alpha contamination
- Marine environment
- And … Involvement of local population in the post-accident gestion