

## Hospital managers must acknowledge RPE and MPE roles, responsibilities and expertise

Radiation Protection Experts (RPEs) and Medical Physics Experts (MPEs) play crucial roles in the safe and effective use of radiation in medicine. European Basic Safety Standards define an RPE as a recognized individual/group having the necessary knowledge, training and experience to give radiation protection advice and identify MPE responsibilities, which include responsibility for dosimetry of medical exposures<sup>1</sup>.

ICRP has recently consulted on a draft report on the *Ethical Foundations of the System of Radiological Protection*. The report notes that the system is built on three pillars: the science of radiological protection; ethical and social values; and experience accumulated from the day-to-day practice of radiation protection professionals<sup>2</sup>. IRPA has identified knowledge, skills and competences required by an RPE, noting that competences of an RPE include substantial elements of radiation safety management<sup>3</sup>. IRPA emphasize that radiation protection (RP) professionals within an organization must take the central role in supporting management to drive and embed RP culture throughout the organization<sup>4</sup>.

RPEs have been instrumental in creating the systems designed to ensure the safe use of radiation in medicine, and play a leading role in managing radiation safety in healthcare. There is a risk that these management roles and responsibilities may be overlooked, particularly during organizational change. Few general managers have a good understanding of radiation dosimetry/risk, and may be unfamiliar with fundamental radiation safety concepts. If managers ignore or over-rule the advice of RPEs they place the safety of patients and staff at risk, and must be prepared to be held to account.

### References

1. EUROPEAN COUNCIL (2013) *Basic Safety Standards for protection against the dangers arising from exposure to ionising radiation*. 2013/59/EURATOM  
<https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=CELEX%3A32013L0059>
2. ICRP (2017) *Ethical Foundations of the System of Radiological Protection [draft report for consultation]*  
<http://www.icrp.org/page.asp?id=348>
3. IRPA (2016) *Guidance on certification of a radiation protection expert*  
<http://www.irpa.net/page.asp?id=54718>
4. IRPA (2014) *Guiding principles for establishing a radiation protection culture*  
<http://www.irpa.net/members/IRPA-Guiding%20Principles%20on%20RP%20Culture%20-2014%20.pdf>