

Media release

CANUPIS study offers reassurance

Zurich, 12 July 2011 – The CANUPIS study published today has found no evidence that childhood cancer rates are higher in the vicinity of nuclear power plants (NPPs) than elsewhere. The findings of the Swiss study confirm those of previous research. Worldwide, around 50 studies have been conducted into this subject over the past 30 years, the majority of which found no link. However, a German study in 2007 identified a higher statistical risk.

The FME believes that the Swiss study was well-designed and thorough. It interprets the results fairly and its statistical power is sufficient to support a solid opinion.

Based on the latest radiobiological knowledge, a causal link between NPPs and childhood leukaemia is implausible. The radiation emitted by an NPP would have to be around 1,000 times greater in order to trigger cancer.

The authors of the Swiss study note that, according to current scientific research, clusters of leukaemia cases around NPPs are rare. Of the 200 or so nuclear facilities (power generating stations and nuclear reprocessing plants) investigated worldwide, a permanently increased risk was found at just three. As the Swiss authors indicate in the study, the facilities in question are the Krümmel NPP in Germany and the Sellafield and Dounreay reprocessing plants in the UK.

Current research suggests that infections may be a central cause of childhood leukaemia. Children who attend nurseries, for example, have a lower risk of leukaemia. Population mixing is another potential trigger for childhood leukaemia. As the British Journal of Cancer recently reported, this hypothesis has been confirmed by 12 studies in six European countries, including at the aforementioned Sellafield and Dounreay plants. The subject has not yet been investigated at the Krümmel NPP.

According to the team responsible for the CANUPIS study, an investigation into the incidence of leukaemia associated with population mixing – completely independent of NPPs – would also be desirable in Switzerland.

Further information is available from the following expert:

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