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DEPARTMENT OF PEDIATRICS
School of Medicine

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Michael T. Lesar
Chief, Rulemaking, Directives, and Editing Branch
Office of Administration
Mail Stop T-6D59
U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission
Washington, DC 20555-0001

RECEIVED

11/31/08
43 FR 44780

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Re: 'Security and Continued Use of Cesium-137 Chloride Sources,' (NRC-2008-0419)

Dear Mr. Lesar and NRC members,

As a scientist whose research depends on the use of a ¹³⁷Cs irradiator for small animal transplant and cell experiments, as well as a bone marrow transplant physician whose patients depend on ¹³⁷Cs irradiated blood products, I urge the NRC to proceed with caution in considering a ban on the use of ¹³⁷Cs irradiators. Discontinuing the use of ¹³⁷Cs irradiators would cripple biomedical research in many areas, such as cell biology, hematopoiesis and bone marrow transplantation, as well as the clinical use of irradiated blood products. The use of small ¹³⁷Cs irradiators in blood banks and research facilities would be very difficult to replace in a cost-effective manner. Alternative radiation sources, such as ⁶⁰Co and X-irradiators are used for human radiation therapy. However, the radiation provided by these sources may have different biological effects on blood cells and small animals compared to ¹³⁷Cs. The vast majority of the basic science and pre-clinical (i.e., animal) work has been done with ¹³⁷Cs; switching to an alternative source would potentially be catastrophic from scientific and economic perspectives. Significant time (years) and effort would be needed to determine and validate radiation doses and deliveries from alternative sources, which would cost millions in NIH funds to accomplish (in addition to the loss of progress in ongoing research), and future results could not be directly compared to many years of established data using ¹³⁷Cs. This would have a tremendously detrimental effect on my research in hematopoietic stem cell and mesenchymal stem cell biology and transplantation. Furthermore, one must also consider the costs and security of disposing of currently-used ¹³⁷Cs irradiation sources which employing the new sources. I realize the potential security risk of ¹³⁷Cs irradiators; however, if utilized in conjunction with appropriate security measures, in my opinion the research benefits greatly outweigh the potential security risks.

In summary, biomedical research as well as transfusion medicine depends on the use of ¹³⁷Cs irradiators, which cannot easily be replaced by alternative sources. I would strongly urge you to allow the scientific community to continue the use of ¹³⁷Cs

Herman B Wells Center for Pediatric Research Cancer Research Institute

James Whitcomb Riley Hospital for Children 1044 W. Walnut Street, Room 402 Indianapolis, IN 46202

(317) 278-0543 fax (317) 274-8679

Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis

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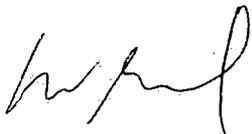
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Call = J. Jankovic (JP52)

irradiators, with appropriate security measures. In this manner, biomedical research can continue unimpaired while efforts are made to develop more secure sources of radiation for biomedical research, such as ^{137}Cs irradiators which have a truly solid core source (unlike current CsCl irradiators), or validation and development of research-grade irradiators using currently-available alternative sources occurs, each of which are likely to take years to implement.

Please note that these comments are my personal view and should not be taken to represent that of Indiana University.

Sincerely,



W. Scott Goebel, M.D., Ph.D.
Assistant Professor of Pediatrics
Indiana University School of Medicine
Herman B Wells Center for Pediatric Research
Cancer Research Institute
1044 West Walnut Street, Room 472
Indianapolis, IN 46202-5225
Tel (317) 274-2540
Fax (317) 274-8679
sgoebel2@iupui.edu