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Alliance for MRI Welcomes Postponement and Amendment of EU Directive

The Alliance for MRI has welcomed the European Commission's announcement that it will postpone and amend legislation which would pose a serious threat to the use of Magnetic Resonance Imaging (MRI) in patient welfare and scientific research.

The EU Physical Agents Directive 2004/40/EC (EMF) is to be delayed by four years until April 30, 2012 to allow time for a substantive amendment to be adopted. The Alliance welcomes the Commission's statement that "The future amendment will aim to ensure that limits will not have an adverse effect on the practice of MRI" and the recommendation to Member States to put the transposition of the current Directive on hold.

If implemented, the Directive would prevent healthcare staff from assisting or caring for patients during imaging. It would mean that some patients who cannot be imaged without this care – if they are young, elderly, frail or confused – would either be denied imaging or have to undergo alternative procedures such as x-rays.

Leading Experts Comment

"MRI is a powerful, non-invasive and safe diagnostic and research tool," says Prof. Gabriel Krestin, a leading member of the Alliance for MRI and professor of radiology at Erasmus University Medical Centre, Rotterdam, in the Netherlands. "However, its application often relies crucially on the presence of a healthcare worker or researcher. If the European Commission legislation were implemented, it would almost certainly be a major setback for scientific research, denying patients innovative treatments in the future."

The Alliance for MRI, which represents a coalition of European Parliamentarians, patient groups, leading European scientists and the medical community, has campaigned to bring attention to the potential plight of patients.

In June 2007, the Alliance for MRI held a lunch at the European Parliament with Commissioner Spidla to discuss research undertaken by Professor Stuart Crozier of Brisbane University, Australia, which vindicated the Alliance's concerns.

In addition to its serious impact on healthcare, the Alliance believes the Directive would threaten Europe's position as world leader in MRI research. The Alliance for MRI believes that it is essential to evaluate the real risk to patients which would be brought about by impeding the full use of MRI, against an unproven risk to workers.

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