

Speech of IAEA Head of the Dosimetry and Medical Physics Section
in occasion of the International Day of Medical Physics 2020 (IDMP2020)

Dear medical physics colleagues,

7 of November is an important and festive day for us, since we celebrate at the same time our profession and the birth of Maria Sklodowska Curie - one of the pioneers of medical physics.

The topic of this year's celebration is "Medical Physicists as Health Professionals", which was chosen by the International Organization for Medical Physics (IOMP) to draw attention to the widespread lack of recognition of our profession by health authorities in many parts of the world.

Medical physics was included among the healthcare professions by the International Labour Organization already in 2008. Nevertheless, more than 10 years later, in many countries around the globe, this has still not been adopted. The IAEA is very aware of this issue and of its consequences that can include:

- non-harmonized academic education programmes in medical physicists and structured clinical training, which is needed to acquire the knowledge and competencies to work independently in a clinical environment;
- lack of professional status and adequate recognition of medical physicists in hospitals, which contributes to brain drain;
- absence of formal medical physics continuing professional development opportunities, which is an indication that medical physicists are not being certified.

All of these aspects can ultimately affect the quality, safety and effectiveness of radiation medicine and thus the diagnosis and treatment of patients.

When working in fields of evolving technological developments in radiation medicine, medical physicists play a crucial role in providing guidance and oversight in validating and optimizing the appropriate use and quality of technology in the diagnosis and treatment of patients. Indeed, the strongest asset in a radiation medicine department is not only the equipment, but the team of professionals responsible for its use: their knowledge and competence will impact on the quality of patient care.

We would like this message to mostly reach today, the medical physicists who work in isolation and who do not see their profession being valued as it should be: the IAEA is aware of your struggle and efforts. We are working alongside the professional organizations and other stakeholders to ensure that medical physics achieves full recognition as a health profession. We are convinced that this is key to ensure the highest quality standards in radiation medicine for the benefit of all patients.

We hope that this message will reach not only medical physicists, but also decision makers and hospital managers and that they will join us in helping the medical physics profession reach its full potential.

Finally, I would like to remind you of the importance of your work and its contribution to healthcare: even if you think that your work is not fully valued and recognized at this moment in time, please, be proud of what you do, do it at the highest possible standard and have trust that in the future, if we all work together, medical physics will be fully recognized as a health profession.