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7th Euroscicon Conference on**Clinical Pathology and Epidemiology**

February 27-28, 2019 | Prague, Czech Republic

**RISK PERCEPTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL
RISK MANAGEMENT IN PROTECTION OF
PUBLIC HEALTH**

The qualified expert assessment of potential environmental and health risks connected to planned industrial, transport and other construction activities becomes an indispensable part of their audit. Whereas the initial phase of risk assessment, the identification of potential human exposure is of pure scientific character, the actual risk assessment increasingly assumes the arbitrary aspects (e.g. safety coefficients), risk communication, its control and management by way of psychological aspects; the collective decision making then becomes a hotly debated political issue. When evaluating perception of environmental risks, psychosocial and psychosomatic factors may be of fundamental importance. This is the case in particular where our knowledge of the true health consequences of exposure to a given factor is incomplete or its action is within the range of values where we do not anticipate the measurable biological effect. This applies not only in the case of the indoor environment related complains but also e.g. to that of non-ionizing electromagnetic radiation and electro-ionic microclimate. A serious consequence found in the syndrome of mass hysteria is the fact that due to differently motivated disinformation, part of the population can suffer from some psychosomatic symptoms. Those imply objective suffering and deteriorating quality of life for those affected. The prevention of such conditions can either be systematic: early educational or popularisation campaigns, specific health education orientated to the development of industrial, transportation, or other types of constructions, and integration of the local civic activities in the program. The purpose of this should not be a cheap belittling of the risk but a reasonable explaining of its acceptable rate, and also the likely advantage to benefit from the realization of the structures. Any later efforts to inform the public about the true state of affairs are normally accepted with distrust and disbelief.

Biography

Vladimir Bencko has graduated from the Medical Faculty of Charles University in Prague in 1961. He was appointed with the Institute of Hygiene (presently the National Institute of Public Health) from 1967-1972. He was an Assistant Professor at the Chair of General and Environmental Hygiene, Medical Faculty of Hygiene, Charles University from 1973-1986. Since 1972, he was temporary Advisor of WHO. During 1990-1992, he was an Advisor to the Federal Committee for Environment of CSFR. Since 1993, he is temporary Consultant of the NATO Committee on Challenges to Modern Society later transformed into the present NATO Science for Peace and Security. Since 2001 up to 2008, he is a Representative of the Czech Republic in the Standing Committee of the European Medical Research Councils. He is a Founding Member of the Central and Eastern European Chapter of International Society of Environmental Epidemiology and in years 1999-2001 President elect of the Chapter.

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