



Norwegian Radiation Chairman Protests Pending Ban of MRI in European Union

By [Codie Leonsch Hartwig](#) Sep 24, 2007

EU Directive 2004/40/EC Effectively Halts Use of MRI in All EU Member States

Professor Dag Rune Olsen, a Norwegian scientist, told a press conference at the [European Cancer Conference](#) (ECCO) that implementation of the Physical Agents (Electromagnetic Fields) Directive in all EU Member States could effectively halt the use of magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), which is an important tool in cancer diagnosis, treatment, and research [the Physical Agents (Electromagnetic Fields) Directive 2004/40/EC].

Professor Dag Rune Olsen told the ECC: "Since the Directive sets limits to occupational radiation exposure [that] will mean that anyone working or moving near MRI equipment will breach them, thus making it possible for them to sue their employers. Even those maintaining or servicing the equipment may be affected." Professor Olsen works in experimental radiation therapy at the Norwegian Radiation Hospital, Oslo, Norway, and is chairman of the physics committee of the European Society for Therapeutic Radiology and Oncology.

A conflicting British study into operator exposure to electromagnetic fields (EMF) from MRI was published by the Health and Safety Executive (HSE) in June 2007 and carried out by Professor Stuart Crozier from Brisbane University, Australia. The study found that anyone standing within about one meter of an MRI scanner while it was in use would breach the exposure limits laid down in the EU Directive. The EU Commission has acknowledged the correctness of the HSE study and said that it will consider the HSE report together with a study it has commissioned itself, due for publication in October 2007, when deciding whether and how to propose amendments to the directive or whether to extend the directive implementation period.

"But they may already be too late," said Professor Olsen. "Slovakia has already implemented the Directive, on the grounds that it was based on the assumption that the limits which it sets would have no effect [on the MRI ban]. This would appear to mean that it is now illegal to carry out MRI scanning in the country."

A recent Eurobarometer [\(video report EHS TV News Fr\)](#) opinion poll showed that most EU citizens believed they were inadequately protected by regulations against the potential health risk posed by electromagnetic fields, such as those related to MRI scans.

More than two-thirds of people interviewed said they were not satisfied with the information they received on Electromagnetic Fields relevant to MRI, and one-third said that they had not been informed at all.

Professor Olsen points out that use of MRI may lead to **less** exposure to radiation rather than **more**. "MRI has to a certain extent contributed to a limit in the increase in the use of ionizing radiation in medical imaging, for example, in CT scans...If the public were informed of this, I am sure that they would be as keen as I am to see that MRI is allowed to continue. The added value that MRI represents to medical diagnostics has been tremendous," Professor Olsen said.

He concluded by saying: "Policy-making should be based on sound science, and to my knowledge there is no scientific evidence of long-term adverse health effects of exposure to static or fluctuating magnetic fields that are commonly found during MR scanning. Hasty decisions without scientific support will in this case have a severe impact on medical diagnostics and must thus be avoided."

Currently eight million MRI patient examinations per year are carried out in Europe. The directive is due to be implemented across Europe by April 2008.

Mary Rice, ["European directive will halt use of MRI scans; cancer diagnosis and treatment will suffer,"](#) ECCO--the European Cancer conference.