



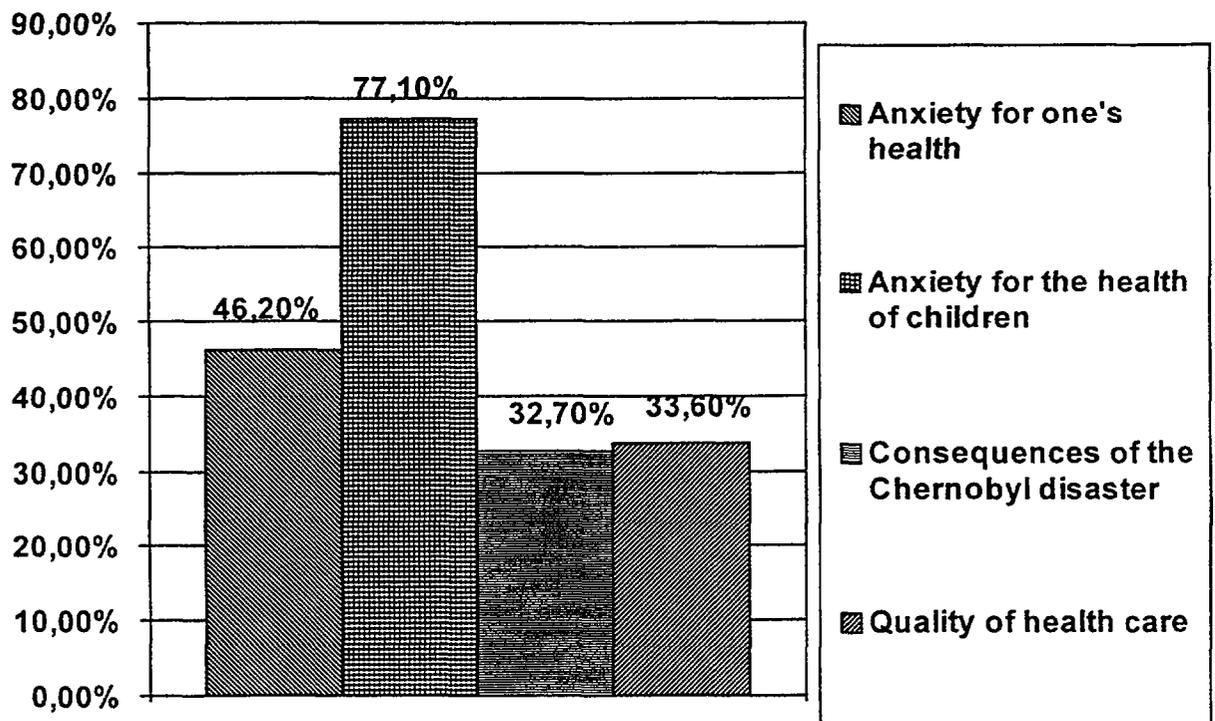
Risks of Insufficient Information Communication During the Post-accident Period of the Chernobyl accident

Olga V. Joukovskaia
Institute of Radioecological Problems, National Academy of Science of Belarus

Dr. Igor V. Rolevich
Ministry of Emergencies of the Republic of Belarus

The modified psychological climate and increased social-psychological pressure in the population, affected as a result of the Chernobyl accident, emerged partially because of insufficient information provided to the population with respect to the radiation and ecological conditions. Such situation resulted in development of chronic psychological stress in the majority of the population residing on the affected areas. The post-accidental stress, which appeared in many people, is characterized by its extraordinary stability. Up to 74% of the affected population were subjected to stress. In 1986 the depressing condition of anxiety was observed in 50% of those examined. By 1998 this number increased up to 76%. Aggravation of health condition still remains in the center of anxiety reasons for the majority of those examined, when in the areas contaminated greater the number of those anxious is much higher than in others.

Population anxiety on certain aspects of life



Besides, the urban population is more concerned in unsatisfactory solution of the problem of liquidation of the Chernobyl accident consequences, than village inhabitants (88,5 and 79,7% accordingly). Noteworthy, that 43% of the urban population and only 25,2% of the

village settlers is concerned in small efficiency of rehabilitation activities on the radioactive contaminated territories. Respondents-women (86,1%) are more anxious than men (84,2%). Besides, almost three quarters of the respondents (74,5%) for last three years became more anxious for their future and future of their children, which leads to greater worries. At the same time it is necessary to take into account, that 7% of the respondents expressed apathy and indifference to everything, and at 7,5% have the feeling of hopelessness.

Another negative tendency exposed in the population, affected by the Chernobyl accident is the reduction of trust to the authorities and governmental bodies, reduction of satisfaction by the activity of local authorities. Only 60,6% of the interrogated characterize their relations with local authorities as satisfactorily, when 37,7% of the people are not satisfied by the level of such mutual relations.

One can make a conclusion, that half of the population, residing on the affected territories, has adapted to conditions of residing in post-catastrophic-extreme situation. The seriousness of the social and psychological problems caused by the consequences of the Chernobyl accident, their aggravation and deepening in conditions of the economic situation in general, require work focused on strengthening social and psychological assistance to the affected population. Qualified psychological support is necessary to the people to help them cope with the difficulties of adaptation, reorient themselves to the new image of life, to help in overcoming of the post-catastrophic stress condition. For this purpose it is necessary to carry out a complex of measures on social and psychological rehabilitation of the population, supporting the measures with the most focussed and personal character whenever possible. It is important to improve the activity of the centers of social and psychological rehabilitation, especially established together with UNESCO to assist people affected by the Chernobyl catastrophe consequences.