Children’s Environmental Health International Initiatives

This is an international mailing list provided by WHO and UNEP dedicated to promoting healthy environments for children

September 2013

INAUGURAL PBC CHAIRMAN’S AWARD

Dr William Suk was honoured at the 15th International Conference of the Pacific Basin Consortium (PBC) for Environment and Health by being presented with the inaugural PBC Chairman’s Award (2013) to recognize his enormous contribution to Children’s Environmental Health especially through the PBC.

Dr Suk is currently:

- The Director of the Superfund Hazardous Substances basic research and training program – known as the Superfund Research Program
- The director of the Centre for Risk and Integrated sciences at NIEHS

Dr Suk has played a special role in the PBC and was instrumental in transforming it from the original Pacific Basin Consortium for Hazardous Waste Research & Management into the organization it is today. He serves as a member of the Board of Directors from 1996-2004 and the Chair of the Board of Directors from 2000-2004. In 1996 he organized the PBC meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia and gave a plenary talk at this meeting. This was the start of the PBC becoming more health-driven. The KL meeting was primarily a health meeting and Bill was instrumental in getting David Carpenter involved in the PBC. Bill then

CHILDREN’S ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH NEWS

Press Releases

IPCC confirms that human activity will further warm the Earth, with dramatic effects on weather, sea-levels and the Arctic

The new report further states that greenhouse gas emissions at or above current rates would induce changes in the oceans, ice caps, glaciers, the biosphere, and other components of the climate system. UNEP (27/9/13)

World leaders renew commitment to anti-poverty targets, agree to adopt new development Goals at 2015 Summit

Countries are set to adopt a new set of Goals that will balance the three elements of sustainable development - providing economic transformation and opportunity to lift people out of poverty, advancing social justice and protecting the environment. UNEP (26/9/13)

Joint Statement on accelerating efforts to achieve the health MDGs

This is a joint statement on the financing of health MDGs and for malaria on the occasion of the 68th General Assembly of the United Nations. WHO (25/9/13)
organized a meeting in Manilla on "Environmental Threats to the Health of Children", which saw my introduction to the PBC and was really the beginning of the focus we now all have on children’s environmental health.

To a very real extent the PBC as it is today reflects Bill’s original vision as an organization that deals with toxic substances in an interdisciplinary fashion ranging from methods of remediation to studies of the health effects. The WHO program on eWaste that was officially launched at the PBC conference is a current day example of the hazardous waste problems that was the original brief of the PBC. I think that it shows Bill’s dedication to such issues that he has been intimately involved in this new project. This should give us all hope for the future.

Peter D. Sly Chairman, PBC Board of Directors
Link to The Pacific Basin Consortium for Environment and Health

JOURNAL ARTICLES

Air Pollution
Modeling national average household concentrations of PM2.5 from solid cookfuel use for the global burden of disease -2010 assessment: results from cross-sectional assessments in India
Previous global burden of disease (GBD) estimates for household air pollution (HAP) from solid cookfuel use were based on categorical indicators of exposure. Recent progress in GBD methodologies that use integrated exposure response (IER) curves for combustion particles required the development of models to quantitatively

Governments to agree increased focus on people with disabilities in development strategies
WHO welcomes the forthcoming agreement at a High-Level Meeting at the United Nations General Assembly which will further improve access to health care and related services for people with disabilities and ensure that they are able to contribute to the sustainable development of their communities. WHO (20/9/13)

UN: Global child deaths down by almost half since 1990
In 2012, approximately 6.6 million children worldwide – 18 000 children per day – died before reaching their fifth birthday, according to a new report released today by UNICEF, WHO, the World Bank Group and the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs/Population Division. This is roughly half the number of under-fives who died in 1990, when more than 12 million children died. WHO (13/9/13)

UNEP Welcomes Renewed Commitment by World Leaders to Phase Out Climate-Damaging HFCs
In the G20 Leaders Declaration, governments agreed that the success of the Montreal Protocol - which has overseen a 98 per cent of all global consumption of controlled ozone-depleting substances, and contributed to tens of millions of cases of avoided skin cancer and cataracts - should be harnessed to phase out HFCs. UNEP (10/9/13)

Syria conflict leaves invisible scars on children
Prolonged exposure to violence and stress, multiple displacement, loss of friends and family members, and a severe deterioration in living conditions are
estimate average HAP levels experienced by large populations. Such models can also serve to inform public health intervention efforts. The authors developed a model to estimate national household concentrations of PM2.5 from solid cookfuel use in India, together with estimates for 29 states. They concluded that their model affords substantial improvement over commonly used exposure indicators in HAP disease burden assessments, by providing some of the first estimates of national average HAP levels experienced in India. Model estimates also add considerable strength of evidence for framing and implementation of intervention efforts at the state and national levels.

*Environmental Health*

**Comparison of child morbidity in regions of Ostrava, Czech Republic, with different degrees of pollution: a retrospective cohort study**

The purpose of this study was to confirm or refute the hypothesis that the morbidity of children (since birth to age 5) born and living in the heavily polluted (PM10, benzo[a]pyrene) eastern part of Ostrava, Czech Republic, was higher than the morbidity of children living in other parts of the city. Ten pediatricians in 5 districts of Ostrava abstracted the medical records of 1878 children born in 2001–2004 to list all illnesses of each child in ICD-10 codes. The children born and living in the eastern part of the city of Ostrava had from birth through 5 years significantly higher incidence rates of acute illnesses than children in other parts of Ostrava. They also had a higher prevalence of wheezing, atopic dermatitis and allergic rhinitis.

*Environmental Health*

leaving the children of Syria with lasting scars. UNICEF (10/9/13)

**UNEP Signs Agreement to Improve Monitoring of Hundreds of International Environmental Accords**

The United Nations Environment Programme has signed a new agreement with one of the world's most respected global auditing bodies to track progress towards the implementation of international environmental agreements covering climate change, hazardous waste, biodiversity, and other issues critical to the future of the planet. UNEP (9/9/13)

**UNICEF gears up to help over 500,000 Malian children return to school**

With the new school year in Mali starting on the 1st of October, UNICEF is scaling up efforts to give a school place to half a million children whose lives were disrupted by the conflict, seasonal flooding and nutrition crisis. UNICEF (3/9/13)

**In the Media**

**The Surprising Source of Most Mercury Pollution**

Mercury has an uncanny ability to bind to precious metals, and for millennia, people have used it to mine gold and silver. Small-scale, or "artisanal," mining — which makes use of mercury in this way — has recently become the leading source of mercury pollution, several recent studies show. Live Science (27/9/13)

**Flame retardants banned years ago finally declining in women, study suggests**

Scientists have documented for the first time that banned flame retardants have declined in people in the United States, where levels of the chemicals had been growing exponentially. The small study,
Chemicals

Prenatal Nitrate Intake from Drinking Water and Selected Birth Defects in Offspring of Participants in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study

The authors examined the relation between prenatal exposure to drinking-water nitrate and selected birth defects, accounting for maternal water consumption patterns and nitrosatable drug exposure. They concluded that in this large, population-based case–control study, women who had babies with neural tube defects, limb deficiencies, and oral cleft defects were significantly more likely than control mothers to ingest ≥ 5 mg of nitrate per day from drinking water. However, study findings suggest that endogenous formation of N-nitroso compounds might not be the underlying mechanism for potential teratogenesis with this water contaminant, because higher intake of nitrate from drinking water did not strengthen associations between prenatal nitrosatable drug exposure and birth defects in offspring.

Environmental Health Perspectives

Economic Costs of Childhood Lead Exposure in Low- and Middle-Income Countries

The main aim of the research was to estimate the economic costs attributable to childhood lead exposure in low- and middle-income countries. The authors developed a regression model to estimate mean blood lead levels in the population of interest. Their main outcome was lost lifetime economic productivity (LEP) due to early childhood exposure. The authors concluded that their estimates suggest that lost LEP associated with childhood lead exposure in low- and middle-income countries currently amounts to $977 billion annually. For comparison, in the United States and Europe lead-attributable economic costs published today, reported that levels in pregnant California women were 65 percent lower than in a similar group of women tested three years earlier. Environmental Health News (25/9/13)

Environmental chemicals a pregnancy risk

From mercury to pesticides, Americans are exposed daily to environmental chemicals that could harm reproductive health, the nation's largest groups of obstetricians and fertility specialists. Associated Press (24/9/13)

E-cigarettes threaten to undo years of gains: Our view

After decades of hard-fought gains against nicotine-delivery devices and the problems they cause, this is no time to relapse. USA Today (23/9/13)

Pesticides’ effect on generations of field-workers

In the late 1990s, the federal government announced it would fund research about environmental chemicals and children's health. Brenda Eskenazi, a professor of maternal and child health, and epidemiology at UC Berkeley, hatched a plan to study Salinas Valley and the people who live there. San Francisco Chronicle (22/9/13)

Studies paint darker picture of PCBs

Several recent studies suggest the negative health effects of PCBs could be worse and more widespread than previously believed, with connections being drawn in recent studies to everything from changes in bird behavior to child development. Glen Falls Post Star (21/9/13)

Opinion: 'Chemical brain drain' endangers generations of children

Centuries ago, citizens of the Roman
have been estimated at $50.9 and $55 billion, respectively, suggesting that the largest burden of lead exposure is now borne by low- and middle-income countries. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

**Water and Sanitation**

**Prenatal Nitrate Intake from Drinking Water and Selected Birth Defects in Offspring of Participants in the National Birth Defects Prevention Study**

The authors examined the relation between prenatal exposure to drinking-water nitrate and selected birth defects, accounting for maternal water consumption patterns and nitrosatable drug exposure. In this large, population-based case–control study, women who had babies with neural tube defects, limb deficiencies, and oral cleft defects were significantly more likely than control mothers to ingest ≥ 5 mg of nitrate per day from drinking water. However, study findings suggest that endogenous formation of N-nitroso compounds might not be the underlying mechanism for potential teratogenesis with this water contaminant, because higher intake of nitrate from drinking water did not strengthen associations between prenatal nitrosatable drug exposure and birth defects in offspring. *Environmental Health Perspectives*

**Additional Publications**

**Lead poisoning prevention awareness campaign:** International lead poisoning prevention week of action 20-26 October 2013

**Tanzania’s Children and the Toxic Lure of Gold**

As small-scale gold mining expands in countries like Tanzania, the number of children involved in mining is also likely to grow. The continent needs to do more to protect families from a lifetime on a dusty, toxic mining site. *Think Africa Press (13/9/13)*

**Climate change is health problem, expert says**

Scientists have blamed global warming and climate change for shrunken glaciers, rising sea levels and longer, more intense heat waves. But how is the Earth’s changing environment harming human health and what can be done to mitigate those effects? *Lincoln Journal Star (12/9/13)*

**Heartbreaking portraits of Vietnamese children suffering from devastating effects of toxic herbicide sprayed by US Army 40 years ago**

In the course of 10 years, American forces sprayed nearly 20million gallons of the chemical in Vietnam, Laos and parts of Cambodia in an effort to deprive guerrilla fighters of cover by destroying plants and trees where they could find refuge.
Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, yet lead exposure is estimated to account for 0.6% of the global burden of disease, with the highest burden in developing regions. Childhood lead exposure is estimated to contribute to about 600,000 new cases of children with intellectual disabilities every year. Link to WHO for more information and to register to share your plans

UPCOMING EVENTS

International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week of Action
October 20th – 26th 2013.

The Seventh International INCHES Conference
November 20th -22nd 2013. Jerusalem, Israel

Children’s Environmental Health Course
November 25th – 29th 2013. Brisbane, Australia

Excellence in Pediatrics Conference
December 4th – 7th 2013. Qatar

31 March – 4 April 2014. El Salvador
The deadline for applications is 15 October 2013

London Daily Mail (8/9/13)
Warning over pregnancy lead levels
Women should stay healthy during pregnancy to keep children's lead levels low, new research suggests. Australian Associated Press (6/9/13)

Russian boys who drink milk or live near old factories have higher pesticide exposures
Russian boys who drink locally produced milk, are breast-fed for more than three months or live near shut-down factories have higher exposures to banned pesticides, according to new research. Environmental Health News (5/9/13)

Lead Paint’s Tragic Comeback
U.S. and European Union companies continue to manufacture lead paint in developing countries, where few governments regulate the stuff. Bloomberg News (3/9/13)

Get children out of mines into schools
Human Rights Watch is calling on the Tanzanian government to curb child labour in small-scale mining, including informal, unlicensed mines. The 96-page report is “Toxic Toil: Child Labour and Mercury Exposure in Tanzania’s Small-Scale Gold Mines.” Dare es Salaam Daily News (1/10/13)

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Have news for us?
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