

WORKSHOP ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT
INTERNATIONAL PEDIATRIC ASSOCIATION (IPA)

Johannesburg, South Africa

August 4, 2010

The International Pediatric Association (IPA) organized a Workshop on Children's Health and the Environment in Johannesburg, South Africa on August 4, 2010 immediately before the 26th International Pediatric Association Congress of Pediatrics. The workshop, held at the Sandton Convention Centre, focused on pediatric environmental health issues of most relevance to paediatricians in Sub-Saharan Africa; 130 pediatricians attended.

This workshop responds to the recommendations of the Bangkok Statement (March 2002) that urged WHO to promote the recognition, assessment and study of environmental factors that have an impact on the health and development of children. More specifically, to incorporate children's environmental health into the training of health care providers and to promote the use of the pediatric environmental history. It builds upon previous workshops that were organized in 2005, 2007, and 2009 that used the WHO training materials on children's environmental health (CEH) and aims at the dissemination of the current training materials through activities to take place in other regions and settings in sub-Saharan Africa. The agenda of the workshop is in the Appendix.

The workshop was designed to enable participants to achieve the following learning objectives:

Identify risks to children from environmental tobacco smoke, chemicals (e.g. lead, mercury, pesticides), air, water and food contaminants, emerging issues (e.g. climate change), and other environmental hazards;

Describe how to recognize, diagnose, prevent and manage adverse effects linked to these environmental risk factors;

Describe why children may be at increased risk of adverse health outcomes and developmental consequences from environmental exposures to chemical, physical and biological agents;

Describe when and how the fetus, the child and the adolescent may be exposed to environmental hazards in different rural and urban settings;

Practice becoming leaders in environmental health education and prevention in the community.

In June 1997, the leaders of the G8 countries stated, "Protecting the health of our children is a shared fundamental value. Children throughout the world face significant threats to their health from an array of environmental hazards, and we recognize particular vulnerabilities of children to environmental threats." (*The G8 Declaration, Denver 1997*). The IPA responded by increasing its focus on pediatric environmental health and joined efforts with the World Health Organization to provide training about children's health and the environment to pediatricians. The IPA has a long and distinguished track record of designing and delivering training to pediatricians since 1912. In September 2001, a joint IPA/WHO Symposium on Air Pollution was held in Beijing, China. In

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October 2003, a pilot training workshop for pediatricians was organized in Mar del Plata, Argentina in collaboration with the Sociedad Argentina de Pediatría and the Latin American Chapter of the International Society of Doctors for the Environment (ISDE). In August 2004, IPA and WHO organized a 1-day training workshop for pediatricians immediately before the International Congress of Pediatrics in Cancun, Mexico. Evaluation of that workshop revealed a tremendous need for additional training in children's environmental health tailored to the specific concerns of each country. To fulfill that need, IPA and WHO launched the International Pediatric Environmental Health Leadership Institute, funded by a grant from the US Environmental Protection Agency. The workshop in Johannesburg, organized by the IPA Committee on Environmental Health chaired by Dr. Ruth Etzel, is a shortened version of the three-day workshop that IPA and WHO previously offered in Kenya (2005), India (2007), and Haiti (2007).

Dr. Etzel encouraged the participants to begin working towards certification in environmental health. To be eligible for sit for the credentialing examination, the candidate pediatricians will be required to fulfil the following criteria:

- Present a seminar about PEH at their home hospital or institution
- Record environmental history from children with illnesses from environmental contaminants and report cases from their practices
- Propose and discuss a community project
- Present a 2nd seminar after the project

Professor Etzel gave a presentation on why children are uniquely vulnerable to environmental contaminants and how paediatricians can be effective advocates for prevention. Next, Dr. Dorothy Esangbedo (President, Paediatric Society of Nigeria) presented a description of the recent epidemic of severe lead poisoning among Nigerian children. Next, Professor W. Gelderblom from the Promed in Capetown, South Africa, discussed what the paediatrician needs to know about mycotoxins. Professor Anthony Costello (University of London, United Kingdom) followed with a presentation on global climate change. At the end of that presentation, the participants broke in to 4 groups for discussion of the case studies that they had brought from home. The group discussions were led by Professor. Jie Ding (China), Professor Salman Mroueh (Lebanon), Professor Leslie Rubin (USA), and Dr. Perry Sheffield (USA).

Professor Mrigendra Raj Pandey (Nepal) began the afternoon session with a presentation on indoor air pollution and tobacco. He was followed by Mr. Dehran Swart (Paraffin Safety Association of Southern Africa) who discussed prevention of childhood paraffin poisoning. Professor Fred Were (Kenya Pediatric Association) next gave a presentation describing aflatoxicosis in Kenyan children. The participants again broke for 1 hour into 4 groups for further discussion of the case studies they had brought from home. The final presentation of the day was from Dr. David Githanga (Kenya Pediatric Association) on water and sanitation – important issues for children.

At the workshop, all participants received a CD-ROM including the WHO Training Package for the Health Sector (19 peer-reviewed PowerPoint modules plus pre- and post-workshop evaluations). Participants were encouraged to promote the topic within their own university, as well as to use the WHO training materials as the basis for their own presentations. It was emphasized that as each module contains a large number of slides, it is important to use only 20 to 25 slides per single presentation. Speakers were encouraged to select only those slides most relevant to the audience and the purpose of the event. Each participant received a certificate of attendance.

The American Academy of Pediatrics donated 50 copies of *Pediatric Environmental Health* (2nd

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Edition), and the WHO donated 50 copies of *Children's Health and the Environment: A Global Perspective. A Resource Manual for the Health Sector* (published in 2006). These two books were offered free of charge to participants.

At the closing, the audience of pediatricians was thanked for their active participation, for contributing to the discussions and making useful suggestions. Speakers and group discussion leaders were thanked for the excellent work undertaken in preparation for the event.

Following the conclusion of the workshop, an optional 70-question multiple choice pediatric environmental health examination was offered to interested participants.

Appendix

**Pre Congress Workshop
Children's Health and the Environment**

**Wednesday, August 4, 2010,
Convention Center, Hall F**

- 08:30 **INTRODUCTIONS**
- 08:40 **CHILDREN'S SPECIAL VULNERABILITY**
Professor R. Etzel, USA
- 09:10 **EPIDEMIC OF LEAD POISONING AMONG NIGERIAN CHILDREN**
Professor D. Esangbedo, Nigeria
- 09:50 **WHAT THE PAEDIATRICIAN NEEDS TO KNOW ABOUT MYCOTOXINS**
Professor W. Gelderblom, South Africa
- 10:30 *Coffee Break*
- 11:00 **GLOBAL CLIMATE CHANGE**
Professor A. Costello, UK
- 12:10 **SMALL GROUP DISCUSSION OF CASE STUDIES**
- 12:30 *Lunch Break*
- 13:30 **INDOOR AIR POLLUTION AND TOBACCO**
Professor M. Pandey, Nepal
- 14:00 **AFLATOXICOSIS IN KENYAN CHILDREN**
Professor F.N. Were, Kenya
- 14:30 **PREVENTING PESTICIDE POISONING IN CHILDREN**
Mr D. Swart, South Africa
- 15:00 **CASE STUDIES FROM PARTICIPANTS**
- 15:30 *Coffee Break*
- 16:00 **WATER AND SANITATION – IMPORTANT ISSUES FOR CHILDREN**
Professor D. Githanga, Kenya
- 16:30 **ACTION STEPS FOR PEDIATRICIANS**
- 17:00 **EXAMINATION FOR PRE-REGISTERED PARTICIPANTS**