

CHILD HEALTH AND THE ENVIRONMENT: RESULTS FROM EU FRAMEWORK 5

5th Framework Programme
Quality Of Life and Management of Living Resources
Key Action 4 – Environment and Health

EUROPEAN NETWORK ON CHILDREN'S SUSCEPTIBILITY AND EXPOSURE TO ENVIRONMENTAL GENOTOXICANTS (QLK4-CT-2002-02198) 2003-2005

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Structure of the project

WP1 and 2 survey and combine the already available data; WP3 and 4 will explore the feasibility of new methods by exchange of materials, to be analysed by national funding. The ethics in relation to monitoring of children is discussed in WP6. The risk assessment of children's exposure is the theme of WP5. All management is within WP7.

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WP6 Ethics

This work package will summarise state of the art in studies with children and focus on ethical issues in studies on placental tissue, studies during pregnancy and on children ensuring that ethical considerations are integrated in all the stages of the project. Informed consent for feasibility studies will be included. Analysis of implications of (and possible conflicts between) the rules laid down in the Council of Europe's Bioethics convention and its associated protocols, the EU GCP directive, the recently revised WMA Declaration of Helsinki, and national regulations concerning research ethics is foreseen.

- Ethical issues related to environmental studies with children to be further developed
- Recommendations need to be developed
- Informed consent and biobanking are special issues to be discussed

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Statements/recommendations

- Birth cohorts have been shown to represent data rich resources available/establishable and worthwhile to be mined for gene environment interactions concerning multiple child diseases, including follow-ups into later life
- Ethical issues in relation to studies of children and environmental health by use of biomarker etc need further consideration taking the child's interest into account. Informed consent, data protection and biobanking deserve special attention

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Statements/recommendations

- Novel and promising biomarkers of effect have become available, which upon proper validation need to be applied, in addition to classical biomarkers within foreseen European biomonitoring/surveillance programs. Thereby also focusing on children's environmental health risks as highlighted by the SCALE initiative
- National activities have been initiated providing input for a concerted European biomonitoring action

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Statements/recommendations

- Data obtained till now indicate that children are not necessarily more susceptible to environmental genotoxins compared with adults.
- Future research should therefore focus on the question raised by the SCALE initiative whether the one child is more susceptible than the other.
- Multiple polymorphisms interactions should be studied
- Continuation of network activities in new set up is recommended

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Research needs

- Age dependent susceptibility (Damage and repair) to be studied in small well defined population and to be supplemented with experimental studies as well as in vitro studies
- Maintenance of cohorts to enable follow up with respect to biomonitoring/adverse health effects
- Ethical issues surrounding the information/participation/follow up including studies of persons not willing to participate
- Communication aspects to be developed

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Conclusions

- The network was timely with much attention and support internationally in EU and in the member states
- The network contributed with data analyses, feasibility studies as well as suggestions of future research
- Risk assessment and ethical issues were included and efforts of setting frames and new studies were developed
- Outputs:
 - Web-sites frequently visited
 - Publications with methodology and results
 - National activities
 - Good collaboration to be continued

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Participants



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