STUDYING LONG-TERM HEALTH EFFECTS OF ENVIRONMENTAL DISASTERS: LESSONS FROM THE PAST

Co-chairs:
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Aim and short description: Environmental disasters of human or natural origin occur each year and may have potentially important impacts on human health. However, studying their long-term health effects is often challenging. The main aim of this symposium is to review the experience from selected past disasters in order to identify key issues for the study of present and future events. After a general overview of environmental disasters, long-term health studies related to 4 specific disasters (Seveso, Chernobyl, Prestige and the Montserrat Volcano) will be reviewed. Particular reference will be given to the identification, recruitment and follow-up of study populations including non-exposed control groups, exposure assessment, the competition between acute response versus long-term monitoring, among other strengths and limitations of the conducted studies. In a general discussion the similarities and differences across the different disasters and studies will be reviewed, and further needs in this area will be identified. Implications for timely events such as Fukushima, the Gulf oil spill and volcano eruptions in Iceland and Chile will be discussed.

Presentations

1. Overview of environmental disasters of human and natural origin
   Speaker: Erik Lebret, The Netherlands

2. Long-term health studies related to the Seveso disaster
   Speaker: Pier Alberto Bertazzi, Milan, Italy
3. Long-term health studies related to the Chernobyl disaster
   Speaker: Elisabeth Cardis, Barcelona, Spain
4. Long-term health studies related to the Prestige oil spill
   Speaker: Jan-Paul Zock, Barcelona, Spain
5. Long-term health studies related to the Montserrat volcano eruptions
   Speaker: Anna Hansell, London, UK
6. Discussion about the similarities and differences and further research needs in this area
7. Concluding remarks
   Speaker: David Savitz, USA