

NATIONAL CHILDRENS' HEALTH STUDY

Developmental disabilities affect 3% to 8% of all American children. There is increasing evidence that some disabilities are associated with some environmental and lifestyle risk factors. For instance:

- 28% of developmental disabilities are due, in part, to environmental causes
- Exposures of pregnant women to toxic chemicals, drugs and smoke doubles the number of babies who are small for gestational age
- Certain pesticides have been etiologically associated with developmental cancer

The Children's Health Study (CHS) is a prospective epidemiological study of American children from conception to adulthood. The purpose of this study is to examine the influence of environment on children's health, development, and risk factors that could lead to disability. The environment, in the study includes chemicals, diet, lifestyle and built environment.

Children Are Especially Vulnerable to Toxins

Children are especially vulnerable to environmental toxins. Toxic materials exist in the natural outdoor environment and in homes. Indoor targets are house dust, second hand tobacco smoke, mold, mites, animal dander and certain pesticides. Children have greater exposure, pound for pound to toxic material. Therefore, they have diminished ability to detoxify.

Why the Study is Needed

The CHS is needed because the rates of chronic disorders in American children are increasing (i.e. asthma, cancer, birth defects, cognitive disabilities and obesity) The chemical and built environments are changing. There is growing evidence that environmental factors are linked to chronic disorders of children that are preventable. Prevention of environmental disorders from disability risk factors depends on science

Changing Chemical Environment

There are 380,000 commercial chemicals in commerce. There are 2,863 that are High Production Volume chemicals (HPV) to which children are likely to be exposed. One-half of HPV chemicals have no available toxicity data.

The National Children's Health Study Needs to be Funded

The NCS has been delayed one year because it did not receive needed funds from the National Institutes of Child Health and Human Development. Adequate funding for this project is essential to gather scientific data to prevent disability. Through good science, environmental disorders associated with disability is preventable.

*Excerpts from the LDA/AAMR Congressional Briefing on "Chemical Exposure, Children's Health and Disability", 406 Dirksen Office Building, May 10, 2005.