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WEEKLY EU HEALTHCARE NEWS UPDATE

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STUDY: POLLUTED AIR AFFECTS CHILDREN'S BRAINS

A study published in the journal „*Environmental Pollution*” has established an association in children aged 9-12 between exposure to air pollutants in the womb and during the first 8,5 years of life and alterations in white matter structural connectivity in the brain.

Experts from the Barcelona Institute for Global Health, who led the study, claim the findings are significant because abnormal white matter structure has been linked to mental health illnesses such as depression and anxiety. The study found that the greater a child’s exposure to pollution before the age of five, the more the brain structure has been altered.

Authors of the research found that the more exposure to particulate matter in the first two years of age – particles of dust, smoke, dirt, soot, or polluting liquids – the greater the volume of the putamen which is a brain structure involved in motor function and learning processes, but with less specialised functions than the cortical structures. “A larger putamen has been associated with certain psychiatric disorders (schizophrenia, autism spectrum disorders, and obsessive-compulsive spectrum disorders),” said ISGlobal researcher Anne-Claire Binter, who co-authored the study.

As part of the study, researchers the effects of air pollution on 3,515 children every month until they turned eight and a half years. To determine the level of exposure, experts estimated the daily levels of particulate matter and nitrogen dioxide in the kids’ homes during the mother’s pregnancy and in their early years.

Source: <https://www.sciencedirect.com/science/article/abs/pii/S0269749122013239?via%3Dihub>

WHO: MISTAKES IN THE USE OF MEDICINES COST MORE THAN €40BN

According to the World Health Organisation, more than 160,000 deaths occur each year as a result of errors in the use of medicines. Unsafe practices and medication-related damages account for 50 per cent of all preventable harm in medical care worldwide. The costs linked to medication errors globally amount to €41.4 billion per year, not including the lost wages and productivity of medical staff.

A recent study commissioned by ECAMET (European Collaborative Action on Medication Errors and Traceability) found a poor level of implementation of medication monitoring systems in European hospitals, with clinical evidence suggesting that this is the most effective way to minimise medication errors at up to 58 per cent.

The ECAMET Alliance calls for the implementation of urgent actions including:

- Mainstreaming drug safety in the Pharmaceutical Strategy for Europe;
- Prioritising strategic investment in drug identification systems in the EU4Health programme to minimise medication errors;
- Support the development and implementation of ECDC (European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control) guidelines and key indicators on medication errors in EU healthcare settings;
- Facilitating the systematic exchange of best practices between healthcare providers.

Source: <https://www.pslhub.org/learn/patient-safety-in-health-and-care/medication/eaasm-medication-errors-survey-dashboard-to-compare-and-contrast-results-across-europe-september-2022-r7740/>

COMMISSION'S PROPOSAL TO BETTER PROTECT WORKERS FROM ASBESTOS DISAPPOINTS EUROPEAN TRADE UNIONS

The unions of waste workers, builders, and firefighters have slammed a new proposal by the European Commission to reduce the maximum exposure threshold for workers to asbestos, claiming the presented plan still leaves them exposed to dangerous carcinogen levels.

The Commission's legislative proposal, published Wednesday (28 September), aims to lower the current occupational exposure limit for asbestos from 100,000 fibres per cubic meter to 10,000 fibres per cubic meter. It envisages improving working conditions and better harmonisation of the limit values across the EU. The draft provisions envision ten times higher levels than the limit demanded by the European trade unions, which want to see that number pushed down to 1,000 fibres per cubic meter.

The draft proposal, a revision to the 2009 Asbestos at Work Directive, follows significant lobbying from trade unions and the construction sector. Industry representatives claim that significantly stricter limits will impair business and pose the risk of making renovations prohibitively expensive — just as the EU plans to modernise 220 million buildings within 30 years as part of its bid to reach climate neutrality by 2050.

The new proposal will now be discussed by the European Parliament and the Council of the EU. Member States' governments would subsequently have two years to implement the new rules into national law.

Source: https://ec.europa.eu/commission/presscorner/detail/en/ip_22_5679

Thank you for your attention!

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