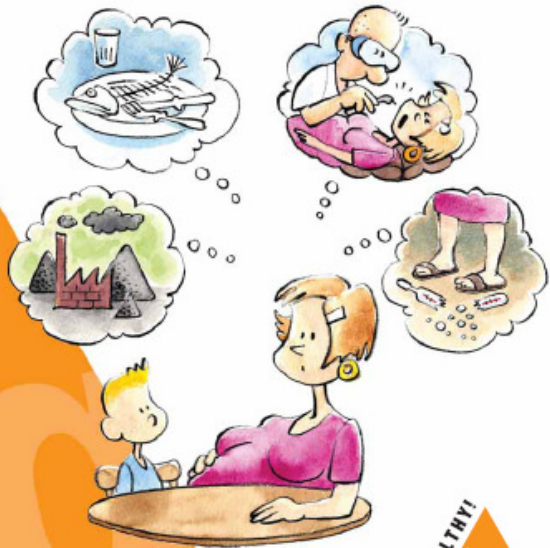


Stay Healthy Stop Mercury campaign

HALTING THE CHILD BRAIN DRAIN

Why we need to tackle global mercury contamination



A joint campaign by:



HALTING THE CHILD BRAIN DRAIN:

why we need to tackle global
mercury contamination

Genon K. Jensen

Executive Director, Health & Environment Alliance

&

Karolina Ruzickova

Health Care Without Harm Europe



Campaign partners



Health Care Without Harm, Europe

✓ **Members** include hospitals and healthcare systems, medical and nursing professionals, community groups, health-affected constituencies, labour unions, and environment and health organisations.

✓ **Aims to transform the healthcare industry** so that, without compromising patient safety or care, it is **ecologically sustainable** and no longer a source of harm to people and the environment.

Health and Environment Alliance

✓ **Network** of citizens', patients', women's, health professionals' and environmental organisations.

✓ **Aims to improve health through** public policy that promotes a **cleaner and safer environment**.



Campaign objectives and activities

To raise awareness about the health effects of mercury contamination and to advocate for a swift reduction of mercury pollution in the EU and worldwide.

→ **Fact sheet series:**



Mercury and Health

Mercury and Vaccines

Managing Small Mercury Spills

Dental Amalgams (forthcoming)

Mercury and Fish Consumption

Mercury in Health Care

Substituting Mercury Sphygmom



→ **Survey report**



→ **“Halting the child brain drain” report**

→ **Policy input into EU Mercury Strategy**





Mercury hair sampling survey

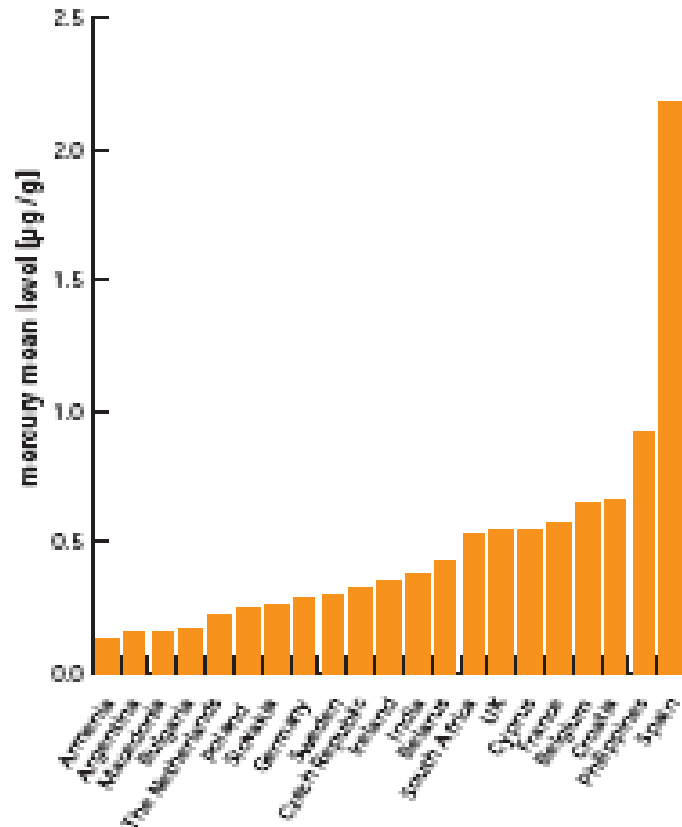
- ✓ **Protocol and data analysis:**
Institute Provincial de Hygiene and Bacteriology of Hainaut
- ✓ **Volunteers recruited through national coordinators in 21 countries**
- ✓ **266 samples received**
- ✓ **Target group:** Women of child-bearing age (18-45 year-old), health professionals, politicians, key leaders





Mercury hair sampling survey

FIGURE 3. Mean values of mercury in hair samples



Mean values per country in ug/g:

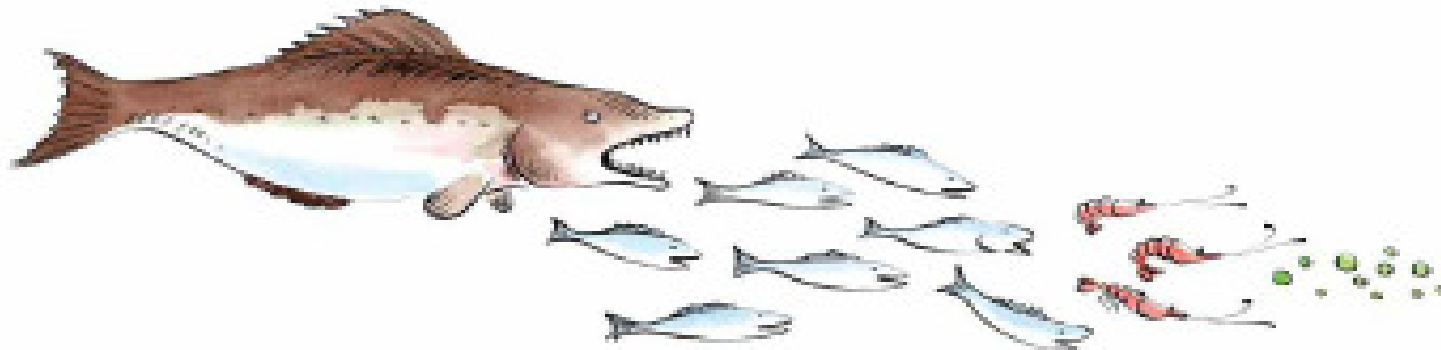
Origin country	Number of participants	Mean value
Armenia	11	0.13
Argentina	8	0.16
Macedonia	19	0.16
Bulgaria	6	0.17
The Netherlands	8	0.22
Poland	24	0.25
Slovakia	9	0.26
Germany	17	0.29
Sweden	5	0.3
Czech Republic	10	0.33
Ireland	18	0.35
India	10	0.37
Belarus	11	0.43
South Africa	3	0.53
UK	12	0.54
Cyprus	9	0.55
France	8	0.57
Belgium	36	0.65
Croatia	10	0.66
Philippines	9	0.92
Spain	9	2.19



Mercury hair sampling survey: Conclusions

- ✓ Elevated levels
- ✓ Link with fish consumption
- ✓ 95% of women presented detectable levels
- ✓ 15% of women had elevated levels above the 1 $\mu\text{g/g}$ of mercury in hair. This is a dose below which there is not likely to be a neurological impact on their children.

(The US National Research Council (1997) has set the most protective limit, or 'reference dose', of 0.7 $\mu\text{g/kg}$ body weight per week, which the US EPA calculated would correspond to a level in hair of 1 $\mu\text{g/gram}$)





Significance of low level exposures

- ✓ Human foetus much more vulnerable
- ✓ Developing brain most susceptible
- ✓ Any neurological damage irreversible

Therefore

- ✓ Women who eat a lot of fish (species with high contents of mercury = predatory species) can put their offspring at risk



Recommendations for the EU

- ✓ **Policy changes** to speed up reductions in the use of mercury (e.g. global ban).
- ✓ **Education** of the population about the current risks and provision of tools (biomonitoring).
- ✓ **Promotion of alternative technology transfer** and financial assistance to Global South countries.





Thank you!

Visit our mercury campaign webpage:

www.env-health.org/stopmercury/



www.env-health.org



www.noharm.org/europe

