

IJPH goes environmental: does it?

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The answer is no and yes. IJPH is a journal of public health—not of environmental health. However, the environmental causes of health and disease have always been one of the key pillars of the highly interdisciplinary field of public health. This is reflected in the curricula of public health professionals (Bjegovic-Mikanovic et al. 2012) such as in our educational flag ships—the schools of public health. IJPH—owned by the Swiss School of Public Health (SSPH+)—has a long tradition in addressing, among other pressing public health challenges, its environmental dimensions, including, e.g., a past issue with an international view on housing and health (Braubach 2011; Howden-Chapman et al. 2011; De Wet et al. 2011).

This issue assembles eight review articles on relevant environmental health topics (Benson et al, Jackson et al, James et al, Mattiello et al, Nichols et al, Tétréault et al. 2013, Toloo et al, Yip et al. 2013). The call was launched in the context of the large and first-ever joint conference of three leading scientific societies in the fields linking the environment with public health. For the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology (ISEE), the conference highlights indeed a successful history of 25 years of dedication to research in support of evidence-based environmental health policies. The International Society of Exposure Science (ISES) reflects the strong development in the field, moving from asking people about environmental exposures toward a science employing

cutting-edge tools and models to objectively characterize people's exposure. The International Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate (ISIAQ)—joining the others for the first time—is at the forefront of research to understand the health challenges in those places where we spend most of our lives: indoors. The recent update of the global burden of disease (GBD) underscores the relevance as well as the unique preventive opportunities of the indoor environment: household air pollution became a top ranking risk factor in many countries around the globe Lim et al. (2012).

The reviews in this issue cover a range of environmental issues. Out of 45 authors who asked for a pre-evaluation of proposals, 36 could be encouraged to consider this call, of which 16 did submit manuscripts within the deadline to compete for the Conference Award. Thanks to the more than 30 dedicated scientists, who promptly acted as peer reviewers, IJPH managed to feature the eight accepted manuscripts online-first, only 4 months after closure of the call, and just in time for the Basel conference (August 19–23, 2013). At times of increasing workloads, Editors are particularly thankful to dedicated researchers who not only agree but deliver critical reviews—even for a Journal with a limited impact factor.

The article of Tétréault et al. (2013), “Cardiovascular health, traffic-related air pollution and noise: are associations mutually confounded? A systematic review” has been chosen for the IJPH conference award. The article was elected by 141 out of 404 conference participants, who volunteered to act as jury based on the abstracts of four pre-nominated reviews. Thus, the selection reflects the attractiveness and novelty provided in the abstract alone. The readers will now have the opportunity to judge whether the abstracts promised too much (or too little). The review of Tétréault et al. (2013) looks into the possible confounding roles of traffic-related air pollution and noise. As Maria

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Foraster emphasizes in the invited commentary (this issue), there are gaps at the interface of environmental epidemiology, exposure science, and indoor research to be tackled to understand the independent role of these traffic-related co-exposures.

The Basel conference team made major efforts to reduce and compensate the environmental footprint of this event (Künzli et al. 2013). As conference chair, I am pleased to see that the second-placed review by Yip et al. (2013), is confirming the link between meat consumption, climate and health, thus, supports our decision to offer only vegetarian lunches during the entire conference.

The global burden of disease was the prime topic of the opening plenary at the Basel conference, juxtaposing a ‘GBD-internal’ (Majid Ezzati) and ‘external’ expert (Nicole Probst-Hensch) with a critical environmental view on the GBD. The originally planned introductory key note by Alan Lopez—the long-standing co-leader of the GBD adventure—had to be canceled. It is my pleasure though that Dr. Lopez provided an accompanying editorial to round up this special issue dedicated to the conference, bridging South, North, East and West (<http://www.ehbasel13.org/>), hosted by the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute.

I now hope readers will find their interest in these timely reviews.

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