

Shanghai Health Study

Topic: Major oil/ chemical industry research on the potential health effects of benzene is underway in Shanghai in collaboration with Fudan University's School of Public Health.

Background:

- Five companies (BP, Chevron, ConocoPhillips, ExxonMobil and Shell Chemical) are supporting a 5-year, ^{Redacted} research study on benzene. Study examines benzene's relationship with leukemias and other blood-related diseases including causes, disease progression and mechanism, and the role of biomarkers. Anticipate publication in 2007.
- Principal investigators are Dr. Richard Irons (University of Colorado), Dr. Fu Hua (Fudan University) and Dr. Otto Wong (Applied Health Sciences, Inc., a private research center). Investigators contracted with EMBSI for support on exposure assessment and occupational health (Dr. Robert Schnatter, Yimei Zhou, and Tom Armstrong, who are also co-investigators.)
- Reasons study is in Shanghai include partnership with Fudan University, past workplace exposures to benzene, and historical exposure database.
- Study structure and practices follow best practices on oversight, ethics.
 - Independent Science Review Board and Ethics Review Board review protocols, advise on technical issues, and advise on meeting international ethics standards.
 - Study costs include equipment and staff training for a state-of-the-art diagnostic laboratory at Fudan University, which will remain at Fudan when study is completed. Laboratory supports studies and provides advanced diagnostics for local hospitals.

Recent Developments

- Study was prominent in 2004 global (Munich) workshop on benzene health effects science. Study received uniformly positive feedback on innovative, ground-breaking techniques among scientific audience.
- Study has not received much attention outside specialized research community. Laboratory opening event was covered in local press (4Q03). Recent print articles in US press stimulated by unrelated court case did not increase public profile. Key investigator (Dr. Irons) has worked with US Consul General in Shanghai and kept him informed of progress.
- Study has faced the anticipated cultural, technical and organizational challenges of working in China. Several adjustments have been made, including seeking a greater role for Fudan University investigators and moving one EMBSI researcher (Yimei Zhou) to Shanghai.
- Challenge remains in working with some of the local government agencies, in particular the Shanghai Institute of Public Health Supervision (IPHS) which has the historical worker exposure database. Currently working to ensure IPHS understands study importance and that Shanghai government officials understand importance of IPHS role.

Note: Excerpt from Briefing Book prepared for Mr. Raymond's Asia-Pacific Trip

- Study looking at ~7500 people in Shanghai to investigate the potential causes and development of diseases of the blood and lymph systems including cancer to confirm or refute whether benzene exposure is involved.