

Veille Internet sur les phtalates du 1/08/2011 au 14/08/2011

Faits marquants :

ARTICLES EN ANGLAIS

- Environment' Poses a Knotty Challenge in Autism

- NYtimes.com

En 2010, un article publié par l'équipe du Dr. Miodovnik dans le journal de NeuroToxicology montrait que les enfants qui avaient été exposés à des niveaux élevés de phtalates avant la naissance étaient davantage susceptibles de souffrir de déficiences sociales entre l'âge de 7 et 9 ans. Ces résultats montrent simplement que ces substances sont associées avec les symptômes de l'autisme. Pour le Dr Hertz-Picciotto, chaque cas est probablement le résultat de la convergence de plusieurs facteurs. Le Dr Miodovnik suggère que les futurs parents évitent les pesticides, ne chauffent pas les plastiques aux micro-ondes et choisissent des produits de soin et d'hygiène personnels sans parfum pour éviter les phtalates.

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- Indian toymakers go green and clean

- Business-standard.com

(Inde) - Le Département de la Politique et de la Promotion Industrielle est prêt à présenter ses lignes directrices aux industriels afin que ces derniers adoptent des matériaux non toxiques pour la fabrication des jouets. Des normes concernant les quantités de phtalates autorisées dans les jouets vont être édictées, ceci après qu'une étude a montré que 45% des jouets fabriqués en Inde contiennent de dangereux phtalates.

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The New York Times

‘Environment’ Poses a Knotty Challenge in Autism

By PERRI KLASS, M.D.

Published: August 8, 2011

Parents of children with [autism](#) often ask pediatricians like me about the cause of the condition, and parents-to-be often ask what they can do to reduce the risk. But although there is more research in this area than ever before, it sometimes feels as if it’s getting harder, not easier, to provide answers that do justice to the evidence and also offer practical guidance.

Recent research has taught us more about the complexity of the [genetics](#) of autism, but the evidence also has suggested an important role for environmental exposures. It has become a very complicated picture: Genes matter, but we usually can’t tell how. Environmental exposures matter, but we usually don’t know which.

In July, a study of autism in [twins](#) was published online in Archives of General Psychiatry. Researchers looked at almost 200 sets of twins in California. In each pair, one twin was autistic.

The study sought to determine how likely the second twin was to have some form of autism. If autism was highly heritable, identical twins should have been far more likely to both have autism than fraternal twins. But the researchers found that fraternal twins were unexpectedly likely to both have autism.

The implication is that something in their common gestational or early childhood experience may have contributed to this similarity.

“The data definitely did surprise me,” said Dr. Joachim Hallmayer, the lead author of the study and an associate professor of [psychiatry](#) and behavioral sciences at Stanford University. “I expected the fraternal twin rates to be lower than what we found.”

This new twin study supported the importance of genetics, but also the role of environmental exposures — and that is part of a general shift in how autism is being discussed.

In the 1950s, autism famously was blamed on bad parenting and emotionally remote “refrigerator mothers.” As the research advanced, including early important twin studies, the inherited basis of the disorder became clear. In a 2010 article published in an American Psychiatric Association journal, autism spectrum disorder is described as “among the most heritable of psychiatric disorders.”

Yet in recent years, researchers have implicated a variety of possible environmental associations as well. Today many scientists believe autism results both from genetic predisposition and from environmental influence.

But “environment” is a tricky word. To many scientists studying autism, it means “everything that’s not the inherited DNA,” said Irva Hertz-Picciotto, a professor of epidemiology at the University of California, Davis, MIND Institute. An environmental influence might be a chemical the fetus is exposed to via the placenta, or it might refer to aspects of nutrition, maternal health, stress — or perhaps exposure to a microbe.

The causal links most strongly supported by research include [rubella](#) infection during [pregnancy](#) and prenatal exposure to medications like thalidomide and valproic acid, an anti-[seizure](#) drug. Other environmental factors,

like air pollution and exposure to certain [pesticides](#) and other chemicals, have been found to be associated with autism, but without evidence of causality.

In a 2010 paper in the journal *NeuroToxicology*, Dr. Amir Miodovnik, a pediatrician at the Mount Sinai School of Medicine, and his colleagues showed that children who had been exposed to high levels of phthalates prenatally were more likely to show social impairments at 7 to 9 years of age.

Phthalates, chemicals found in many consumer products, are so-called endocrine disruptors, hormonally active substances that can interfere with a variety of developmental processes, including brain development. Yet these data don't demonstrate cause and effect, Dr. Miodovnik said, "only that these substances are associated with symptoms found in autism." Conversely, taking prenatal [vitamins](#) around the time of conception has been associated with a lower risk of autism in a recent study.

These epidemiologic associations may point us in the direction of still other factors involved in the making of autism. "Every case is probably a result of the confluence of many factors," Dr. Hertz-Picciotto said. "No case probably has one cause."

So it's hard — and frustrating — to offer prospective parents advice about avoiding risks we still can't clearly identify and factors that may differ from family to family. But some advice seems well grounded, if unsurprising: Take prenatal vitamins before trying to conceive. Make sure your immunizations are up to date. Get good prenatal care. Talk to your doctor about the risks and benefits of any medications you take.

Dr. Miodovnik points out that potentially toxic substances are ubiquitous and cannot be completely avoided, but suggests that prospective parents try to avoid pesticides, don't microwave plastics that may contain endocrine disruptors, and consider choosing fragrance-free personal products (phthalates are used in many fragrances).

Still, it's hard to talk about this without terrifying parents. And I wonder if in giving advice about prevention, we risk repeating the errors of the past, making parents feel they're to blame for a child's autism because they failed to micromanage an environment full of complex agents with potential to interact with fetal genes in a range of damaging but poorly understood disruptions.

Learning more and understanding more ought to make us more helpful to parents, and of course to children. We respect them by acknowledging that there is nothing simple in the development of autism: The causes are genetic, and not simple, and environmental, and not simple. And if the studies tell us anything clearly, it is that we have much to learn about the interplay of genes and environmental exposure and the individuality of this complex disorder.

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Indian toymakers go green and clean

Shine Jacob / Kolkata August 09, 2011, 0:04 IST



In order to ensure safe fun for toddlers, toy manufacturers in India have embarked on a green drive by initiating a recycling process and the use of non-toxic raw materials.

“The department of industrial policy and promotion (DIPP) is ready to come up with guidelines for the industry in a month or two. We are trying to create awareness among small manufacturers of this unorganised sector now. We have already urged all our 600-odd members to adopt non-toxic materials only, and if possible, to recycle toys too,” said

Raj Kumar, president of the Toy Association of India (TAI).

TAI has recently launched its ‘We Care’ campaign especially for this.

The government move came after the Bombay High Court asked the Bureau of Indian Standards (BIS) to frame a directive — which is now awaiting DIPP clearance — on the amount of phthalates permissible in toys.

The court directive came after a study by Delhi-based Centre for Science and Environment showed that 45 per cent of the toys made in India contain dangerous phthalates. Regular exposure to phthalates — a group of chemicals — can cause asthma, skeletal defects, damage the male reproductive system and impair the lungs.

“As a responsible firm, we are using raw materials like high-density polyethylene (HDPE), styrene acrylonitrile (SAN) and acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS), which are not harmful. But government and associations should work on creating this awareness among small-scale producers who are using polyvinyl chloride (PVC), which has higher lead content and affects the health of kids,” said Juzer Gabajiwala, former secretary of The All India Toy Manufacturers’ Association (TAITMA) and a partner of Peacock Toys & Games.

However, this is considered to be a step by the local manufacturers to tackle the Chinese challenge. According to TAI, more than 55 per cent of the Rs 6,000-crore Indian toy industry is accounted for by imports, though the industry is growing at 30 per cent a year.

“Now, the quality of Chinese toys has improved slightly, but the products in the grey market still are sub-standard,” Gabajiwala said.

On the other hand, he argued that the government should give adequate time for manufacturers to implement the guidelines. A recent letter by TAI to DIPP echoed this demand and said that though certification for toxicity and safety should be made mandatory, the government should set a timeframe for its phased implementation.

“Otherwise it would be difficult for a majority of the small investors who run the industry,” he added.

Though TAI demands include grant of special status for the industry among micro, small and medium enterprises (MSMEs), a five-year dedicated programme to boost sales, further funds for skill development, research centres and subsidies, the buzzword among Indian toy manufacturers now is safety first and ‘We Care’.

Though some small manufacturers are still jittery on the way ahead after the directive, some feel it would make Indian toys stand out with an environment-friendly brand identity amid Chinese dominance in the global market.

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