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HBM4EU-MOM: intervene to raise awareness to specific dietary recommendations and reduce prenatal exposure to mercury

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Abstract

BACKGROUND AND AIM: Mercury and its compounds are toxic and are among the substances of higher concern globally. Toxicity depends on mercury compounds, route of exposure and duration. The European population is mostly exposed to organic mercury (methylmercury) due to fish consumption; while exposure to inorganic and elemental mercury is largely associated with dental amalgams, accidental spills of elemental mercury and food produced in contaminated sites. Previous studies have shown that mercury levels in European population are higher in countries with higher fish consumption. However, because of the beneficial nutrients they provide, fish are an essential component of the human diet. In order to reduce exposure and avoid adverse health effects, it is extremely important to balance the risks and benefits of eating fish, especially in vulnerable groups such as pregnant women. Most European countries do not have official guidelines for the consumption of fish during pregnancy, and even if these guidelines exist, they are often not communicated to pregnant women in an appropriate way. As such, under the European Human Biomonitoring Initiative (HBM4EU) an intervention study – HBM4EU-MOM – is being developed in five European countries with high fish consumption (Cyprus, Greece, Iceland, Portugal, Spain) to help reduce prenatal exposure to mercury, while ensuring the nutritional benefits of fish by developing and raising awareness to specific recommendations for fish consumption during pregnancy. **METHODS:** This presentation will highlight the work already performed, including the harmonized development of the intervention and support materials to be implemented in the five countries. **RESULTS:** Preliminary results on the implementation of the developed intervention and its evaluation using Human Biomonitoring will also be presented. **CONCLUSIONS:** This study's results will support the definition of policies to protect human health in vulnerable populations. HBM4EU has received funding from the European Union's Horizon 2020 research and innovation programme under grant agreement No 733032. **KEYWORDS:** Heavy metals, Chemical exposures, Exposure assessment, Food/nutrition, Biomarkers of exposure, International collaboration

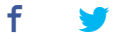
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