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Current Projects

Effect of Dioxin Exposure on Male Sexual Development

Animal studies have shown effects of dioxins on sexual development, hormonal levels, and developmental malformations. However, the relationship between dioxin exposure and human sexual development has not been well studied. An ongoing collaborative investigation between HSPH scientists and a Russian team in Chapaevsk, where there is evidence of environmental contamination with dioxin, is evaluating the prevalence of developmental abnormalities and their association with dioxin exposure among a cohort of over 2500 males aged 11-16. Physical examinations were conducted on all subjects and cases of cryptorchidism, hypospadias, and delayed sexual maturation based on Tanner staging and other physical measurements were identified. A case-cohort design was used to identify controls matched by frequency within age groups. Blood samples are currently being collected on both the cases and controls, along with the mothers. Long-term goals of this project include following a subset of cases and controls prospectively to assess later measures of sexual development, such as sperm quality. Paige Williams is the statistician on this study; other HSPH collaborators include Russ Hauser (P.I.), Susan Korrick, Mary Lee, Larisa Altshul, and Jennifer Adibi.