

INTERNATIONAL COORDINATION IN BIRTH COHORTS

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Background and Aims: Miami Declaration, agreed at the G8 Environment Ministers meeting in 1997, called for cooperative actions by major industrialized governments to protect children's health. Their meeting held in Italy in 2009 agreed to collaborate on studies related to impacts of environmental chemicals and heavy metals on children's health.

Methods: In FY 2010, the Ministry of the Environment started Japan Environment and Children's Study (JECS), a birth cohort study involving 100,000 children and their parents, biological sampling and medical questionnaire from the pregnancy until the child becomes 13 years old. Large-scale birth cohorts of 100,000 children exist in Denmark and Norway, and planned in the United States. In order to strengthen coordination among these studies, the Ministry organized an international workshop in February 2011.

Results: text Experts from JECS, similar cohorts in the United States, Denmark and Korea, International Child Cancer Cohort Consortium (I4C), WHO and UNEP discussed international coordination in birth cohorts. In JECS, recruitment started in January 2011, and the methods for outcome measurements are being finalized soon. Analysis of human and environmental samples will start in a few years. Participants agreed that harmonization efforts should start at this stage when large-scale national birth cohorts are starting in several countries.

Conclusions: Working groups for harmonizing outcome and exposure measurements should be established under the auspices of intergovernmental organizations. I4C is a good example for such efforts.