

PREFACE

This volume contains papers presented at the International Conference on Environmental Pollution and Child Health: Critical Needs and Issues for Central and Eastern Europe, held in May 1996 in Sosnowiec, Poland. The aim of the meeting was to bring together researchers, clinicians and policy makers from different countries, particularly from the Central and Eastern Europe to discuss, first time in the region, the specific issues concerning child health at the international level. The conference has contributed not only to the exchange of state-of-art in the field of a health risk posed to children from environmental pollution and related methodical issues encountered in the design of epidemiological studies but also to establishing of the personal contact between people working on the similar problems in the Region, in Western Europe and North America.

The goals of the conference were as follows: 1. to provide scientists, physicians and other health professionals from Central and Eastern Europe information to help them address their pediatric environmental health priorities, 2. to help standardize methods used in different countries, and 3. to foster collaborative research. Six symposiums formed a framework for discussion: Lead Exposure Assessment, Lead Health Effects, Air Pollution, Congenital Malformations, Registries and Reproductive Outcomes- Methods. Furthermore, very successful round table discussions focused on Registries, Organic Compounds, Prenatal Growth and Development, Hg, Cd and Other Heavy Metals and Preventive Strategies enlarged the spectrum of topics and made possible an intensive exchange of opinions. The junior scientists had a great opportunity to joint the discussion and to exhibit the outcomes of their investigations during the presentation of a number of posters.

In spite of the different degree of the economic development and transformation of societies in the former communist countries, the public health and environmental problems have had the same denominator, the unpleasant heritage of the totalitarian era. The organizers of the conference realize that one meeting cannot solve all problems accumulated in the past; however, they believe that the first step to do that is to define correctly the problems. If the Conference was found to be helpful in evaluation of present problems in the field of children exposure to environmental pollution than the expectations of the organizers were fulfilled.

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