

# Environment and Health – Bridging South, North, East and West.

Conference of ISEE, ISES and ISIAQ , Basel, Switzerland 20 – 23 August 2013



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## **Symposia S-1-33 Exposure assessment in indoor and outdoor air pollution and its impact on health, in memory of Manel Nebot and Christophe Declercq**

The symposium “Exposure assessment in indoor and outdoor air pollution and its impact on health,” held on August 20 at the International Conference on Environment and Health in Basel, Switzerland, was dedicated to the memory of Manel Nebot and Christophe Declercq.

The conference, entitled “Environment and Health - Bridging South, North, East and West,” was organized by ISEE, ISES and ISIAQ, three major international scientific societies active in the field of epidemiology and environmental health.

The symposium presented and discussed recent research on exposure assessment in air pollution – both indoor in homes and buildings and outdoor – and its impacts on health.

The symposium was initially dedicated to the memory of Manel Nebot, whose work has been key to advances in public and environmental health in Europe and elsewhere. In particular, Manel participated actively in numerous national and international projects related to air quality, both indoor and outdoor. As a leader of several international projects, such as IMPASHS (<http://www.ensp.org/node/731>), he made important contributions to evaluating passive exposure to second-hand smoke in Europe and the Americas. Manel also played a key role in evaluating the Spanish law on smoking, providing evidence that led to the total ban on smoking in public places. This ban protects people’s health, especially for vulnerable groups such as pregnant women, children and those with health problems. Manel’s numerous scientific articles have been published and continue to appear in leading journals. Manel will be remembered not only for his important scientific contributions, but also for his clear thinking, his great kindness and his wonderful sense of humor.

A few weeks before the symposium in honor of Manel, the untimely passing of our dear colleague and friend, Christophe Declercq, led us to add a tribute to this outstanding epidemiologist at the French Institute of Public Health Surveillance (InVS). Christophe was talented at everything he undertook, from epidemiology to music. He coordinated the French Surveillance Program on Air Pollution and Health ([http://www.invs.sante.fr/en/Invs\\_en/Topics/Environment-and-health](http://www.invs.sante.fr/en/Invs_en/Topics/Environment-and-health)); and contributed actively to many European projects, including Apehis (<http://www.apheis.org/>), Aphekom (<http://www.aphekom.org/web/aphekom.org/home>) and Escape (<http://www.escapeproject.eu/>). To all this work, he brought his creative mind, his rigor, and his strong commitment to social justice. In the field of music, Christophe played and taught the violin, and founded groups that brought together lovers of folk music in Northern France, where he lived.

Turning to the symposium, it included presentations from five international speakers in the field of environmental epidemiology who conducted studies to evaluate the effects of indoor and outdoor pollution.

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The first speaker, Ana Navas- Acién from Johns Hopkins University in the U.S., spoke on “Second-hand smoke exposure in Latin America: Measuring air nicotine to advance smoke-free environments.” In her presentation she discussed the design and results of an international project, conducted in 11 countries in Latin America after 2002, that measured nicotine levels in different indoor environments. Ana honored Manel Nebot with her fond memories of him as a key player in this and other projects, and she highlighted the vital scientific and human role he played in achieving smoke-free environments and health protection.

In the second presentation, Masood Kadir, of the Department of Community Health Sciences at Aga Khan University in Karachi, Pakistan, discussed the paper “Biomass fuel and second hand smoke exposure among pregnant women from low and middle income countries.” The study, conducted in nine countries in Africa, the Americas and Asia, focused on the assessment of exposure to indoor air pollution as the third leading cause of disease burden worldwide. The study highlighted the need to conduct further research and public-health action on this problem, especially for the most vulnerable population groups such as children and women.

Marisa Estarlich, a researcher in the area of environment and health research at the Centre of Public Health of Valencia (CSISP), then presented the results of work entitled “Comparison of different geostatistical methods to estimate exposure to air pollution in epidemiological studies.” Marisa showed different methods for assessing individual exposure to air pollution used in the INMA (Cohort Study on Environment and Children's Health) study conducted in seven locations in Spain. She discussed methodological issues in the use of empirical measures, geostatistical techniques and geographic information systems to assess potential health effects, especially among vulnerable groups such as children.

Rémy Slama, a researcher at France’s Inserm and Albert Bonniot Institute at the University of Grenoble, then presented the paper “How to assess exposure to atmospheric pollutants in epidemiological studies? An illustration of some trade-offs in the context of pregnancy exposures.” Rémy reviewed and discussed the advantages and limitations of different tools and procedures for assessing exposure to air pollution during pregnancy. And he suggested using advanced devices, such as mobile sensors and individual dosimeters, to better measure personal exposure. During his talk, Rémy reminded us that Christophe was not only an excellent scientist but also an exceptional person.

Lastly, Laura Perez, a researcher at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute in Basel, Switzerland, presented “Aphekom findings.” In it she first summarized the work coordinated by Christophe on the health impact assessment of urban pollution in the project’s 25 cities. She also delivered a moving tribute to Christophe. And she presented her own work in Aphekom with Nino Künzli on proximity to traffic and its impact on the development of chronic diseases such as childhood asthma and coronary heart disease.

More than 70 people attended the symposium, including many researchers involved in projects with Manel and Christophe, such as Aphekom, IMPASHS, ESCAPE, MedParticles and others.

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Below appear two photos of the symposium's introduction with Manel and Christophe on the screen.



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Here you can see Manel enjoying the photo shoot at the final Apekom meeting in March 2011 in Paris



And here's a beautiful picture of Christophe playing the violin.



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Lastly, here's a picture taken at the symposium, with Christophe on the screen and everyone standing listening to an extract of his song "Reveillez-vous" taken from his CD.



You can hear Christophe's music at [http://bemolvpc.com/product.php?id\\_product=75](http://bemolvpc.com/product.php?id_product=75) and <http://archivesdufolk59-62.blogspot.fr/2013/07/christophe-declercq-1956-2013.html>.

And you can visit Manel Nebot's blog at <http://manelnebot.blogspot.com.es/>.

In summary, we speak for all of us who knew Manel and Christophe when we say they will always be in our hearts and sorely missed. Both would have wanted us to continue to do the best science possible, and expand our knowledge and understanding about air pollution and health to improve people's quality of life. For these reasons, we dedicated this symposium to their memory.

Sylvia Medina and Ferran Ballester, chairs of the symposium.