



## Monthly Newsletter

### From the International Clearinghouse

#### April 2013 (issue 2013-4)

#### What's going on regarding birth defects (contributed by LD Botto)

- **Increased body mass index (BMI) and birth defects.** A study by Lisa Marengo, N Farag and Mark Canfield from the Texas birth defects program (*Matern Child Health J.* 2013 Jan 31. PMID: 23371247) reinforces the notion that obesity, and in particular a BMI of 30 or greater (among women not known to have diabetes) is associated with an increased risk for several birth defects, including spina bifida, hypospadias, and cleft lip with/without cleft palate. They also note a negative association with gastroschisis (odds ratio, 0.35), seen in other studies and yet unexplained.
- **Survival of children with Down syndrome.** Outcomes in people with Down syndrome have long been a topic of epidemiologic interest to many in the Clearinghouse. A recent paper published in *Pediatrics* (Kucik et al, *Pediatrics.* 2013 Jan;131(1):e27-36. PMID: 23248222) evaluated 16,500 children born from 1983 through 2003 in the United States. They estimated survival at various ages: at 1 year it was 93%, at 5 years it was 93%, and at 20 years it was 88%. Strong risk factors for premature mortality were low birth weight and the presence of heart defects. In addition, there was some evidence of racial disparities. This study highlights the modestly improved survival at later ages of people with Down syndrome in recent decades, as well as the remaining room for improvement.
- **Explaining racial disparities in infant health in Brazil.** An innovative study out of ECLAMC (*Am J Public Health.* 2013 Feb 14. PMID: 23409894), authored by Kwame Nyarkko, Jorge López-Camelo, Eduardo Castilla and George Wehby, sought to evaluate contributors to racial disparities in low birth weight and preterm birth in Brazil. In their decomposition models, half or more of the disparities in these two measures could be attributable to differences in prenatal care, geographic location, followed by socioeconomic variation. They then suggest that improving services targeting prenatal care and health service location could help reduce health disparities in these communities.

#### News from the Headquarter and Executive Committee

- **First experiences with Clearinghouse listserv.** The listserv, barely weeks old, is currently the conduit of several interesting discussions. For example, it is helping to shape the program of the upcoming annual meeting as well as helping identify groups with specific interests for joint studies – for example, the study of defects of ‘blastogenesis’ and the genomics of birth defects. We look forward to all of us using this tool for our shared goals. If you have comments or suggestions on how to make the listserv even more useful, do not hesitate to let us know
- **April 30 deadline for applications to the 2013 “Alessandra Lisi Award”.** Details, criteria, and procedures are available at [www.icbdsr.org](http://www.icbdsr.org).
- **ICBDSR Annual Meeting 2013 -- San José, Costa Rica, 3 to 6 December 2013.** With your help, particularly through listserv discussions, the planning committee is developing a compelling and up-to-date scientific program. Consider submitting your best abstracts on these or other topics -- the deadline is approaching (31 August 2013). Information about hotel reservation have been published on the the ICBDSR website. Please note that the special package at Radisson Hotel in S. José is valid until November 15, 2013.
- **2013 Training program in Surveillance and Prevention of Birth Defects.** Trainees have been selected and the residential portion will take place in Geneva from 27 to 31 May 2013. This year, this portion will be preceded by a distance-learning component, articulated in several weekly modules with slide lectures, reading assignments, and quizzes.

#### Upcoming deadlines

- **30 April 2013:** nominations for the Alessandra Lisi Prize (email to [centre@icbdsr.org](mailto:centre@icbdsr.org))
- **20 May 2013:** Data for the **2nd quarter 2012**, to be published in the **Quarterly Report/Krystalos**.
- **31 August 2013:** abstracts for 2013 Annual Meeting (details to be made available in the near future).

*Would you like to contribute with any news from your program for next Monthly Newsletter?  
Please send contributions, comments or questions to [centre@icbdsr.org](mailto:centre@icbdsr.org)*