



Monthly Newsletter From the International Clearinghouse

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What's going on regarding birth defects

- *British Medical Journal* has published a new study about the relationship between folate levels in women's blood and the risk of having a baby affected by a neural tube defect (NTD), such as [spina bifida](#) or [anencephaly](#). In this study, scientists at CDC and elsewhere found that blood folate concentrations can predict the risk of neural tube defects in a population. The results will be useful for public health officials interested in understanding the risk of folate-sensitive NTDs in their areas and planning prevention programs.

For more info, please see <http://www.cdc.gov/ncbddd/birthdefectscount/features/kf-redbloodcell.html>.

Key highlights:

- Lower blood folate levels in a population are associated with a higher risk of NTDs.
- For the prevention of NTDs, the optimal blood folate concentration in a population is 1000 nmol/L or greater.
- Blood folate levels alone can be used as a tool to determine the need for and the effectiveness of neural tube defects prevention programs.
- At the annual meeting of the Teratology Society in Bellevue, Washington (U.S.), there was a session on June 30, 2014 devoted to an ongoing anencephaly cluster in central Washington State. Dr. Mark Canfield (USA-Texas) was one of the invited panelists, speaking on "Environmental and Occupational Exposures and Neural Tube Defects on the Texas Border with Mexico (1995-2000)." Dr. David Erickson (now retired from CDC) gave an overview of clusters and cluster investigations in public health. Topics from other panelists included a description of the anencephaly cluster and how it was discovered and reported, as well as the role of fumonisin (a toxin produced by a mold found in corn) as a cause of NTDs in rodents. Fumonisin was also suggested as a cause of the anencephaly cluster on the Texas-Mexico border in 1991.
- September 9th is the International **FASD Awareness Day**. For more info, please see <http://www.fasday.com/>
- Preliminary Announcement of the **7th International Conference on Birth Defects and Disabilities in the Developing World (ICBD)**, 27-30 Sept. 2015, Dar es Salaam, Tanzania. For general information about the conference, please contact globalprograms@marchofdimes.com. A conference website with information on sponsorship, program, abstract submission and registration will be live in the early fall.

News from members

Latin American Collaborative Study of Congenital Malformations (ECLAMC): The **46th ECLAMC Annual Meeting** (RAE46) will take place in Buzios, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, between November 2 and 7, 2014. Those interested can contact Mrs. Mariana Piola, eclamc@eclamc.org. The central themes of this year will be the Skeletal Dysplasias, in the clinical part, and the Structure and Integration of Networks, in the operational one.

News from the Headquarter and Executive Committee

- We are continuing to develop a collective plan to observe **World Birth Defects Awareness Day**, slated for January 15, 2015. More information is forthcoming in the next couple months, particularly after further discussion at the Annual Meeting in September. In the meantime, if you want some specific organization or social media in your country to be included in the distribution list, please provide their contact details to centre@icbdsr.org
- **2014 Edition of the Training Program** on Surveillance and Prevention of Birth Defects and Preterm Births, in figures: 20 participants from 18 countries, 2 observers from WHO, and 9 instructors. This unique training was organized by the ICBDSDR, CDC and WHO.
- **ICBDSR Annual Meeting 2014** – Helsinki, Finland: A total of 39 abstracts were accepted as either an oral or poster presentation. At this Annual Meeting, we expect to have good representation from many of our programs, as well as some other important international organizations. Remember that the info regarding the Annual Meeting and Workshop, is available on the website, and be sure that you make your hotel reservation before September 1.

Upcoming deadlines

- **July 31, 2014:** payment of 2014 annual dues.
- **September 1, 2014:** Hotel reservation deadline for the Annual Meeting and Workshop.