UPDATE ON ICBDSR ANNUAL MEETING
The 47th ICBDSR Annual Meeting will be held as virtual meeting in 2021 through the CVent platform. We will return to an in-person meeting in 2022, hosted by Italy IMER Registry in Bologna. The virtual meeting will be held on Monday, October 11th, 2021. The meeting will run from 9 a.m. to 12 p.m. US Eastern Time EST (GMT -5). A detailed time zone schedule will be provided at a later time, according to local Daylight Savings Time. From 9-10 a.m. EST, we will conduct the ICBDSR Annual Business Meeting for Program representatives, and from 10 a.m.-12 p.m. EST, we will conduct an abbreviated annual meeting for all members and guests. Updates on the virtual annual meeting will be posted on the ICBDSR website.

NEWS AND UPDATE ON COVID-19


How Long Will Your Coronavirus Vaccination Last?
The current data on the mRNA vaccines is very promising. See more from Yale Medicine here.

WHO Coronavirus (Covid 19) Dashboard
The WHO Coronavirus disease situation dashboard presents official daily counts of COVID-19 cases and deaths worldwide: https://covid19.who.int/.

EPI-WIN: WHO Information Network for Epidemics
EPI-WIN is part of the WHO Health Emergency Programme’s risk communication efforts and was established following the COVID-19 outbreak. EPI-WIN seeks to give everyone access to timely, accurate, and easy-to-understand advice and information from trusted sources on public health events and outbreaks. News and updates at https://www.who.int/teams/risk-communication.

ICBD corner: News and comments from the International Centre on Birth Defects (ICBD)

1. Are you using checklists in your program? You probably use (and find useful) a checklist when you go grocery shopping, lest you forget the milk. Checklists help “summarise and simplify what to do; measure and provide feedback on outcomes; and improve culture by building expectations of performance standards into work processes” Lancet 2009, Bosk et al. Importantly, checklists alone cannot do the job. A common sense of mission is, in many ways, the ‘secret’ to the success of checklist implementation – through, for
example, ongoing feedback between team leaders and frontline workers, and by empowering the latter to participate in improvement and evaluation.

As many of you return from well-deserved holidays, why don’t you check out the reporting checklists in the Quick Reference Handbook, developed by WHO, CDC, and ICBDSR, and see how they make it easier for your staff to do it right (PDF available at [https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240015418](https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240015418)).

We anticipate the release of the mobile app (for IOS and Android) by early fall. And as usual, your feedback is welcome and very much encouraged.

2. **Two personal reading suggestions** – one on the genetics of congenital heart disease, and the other on the ongoing missed opportunities for preventing neural tube defects.

**Genomic frontiers in congenital heart disease.** Morton SU, Quiat D, Seidman JG, Seidman CE. Nat Rev Cardiol. 2021 Jul 16. doi: 10.1038/s41569-021-00587-4. Online ahead of print. PMID: 34272501. *To this day, the causes of over half of congenital heart disease remain unexplained. In this interesting review, the authors discuss how the use of multiple analytic tools (from whole genome sequencing to transcriptomics) is helping expand our understanding of the genomic factors causing congenital heart disease – from classic protein-coding sequence variant to copy number variants to non-coding variants.*


*We listed this paper in past newsletter under the section ‘Selection of the Literature’, but it is worth listing it again here, on the 30th anniversary of the MRC randomized clinical trials that showed how folic acid could prevent many (and, worldwide, most) cases of neural tube defects. Can this be the year that mandatory fortification with folic acid can finally be implemented worldwide and eliminate folic acid-preventable spina bifida?*

*Lorenzo Botto, ICBD Director*

**What’s Going on Regarding Birth Defects**

**Human Teratogens: A Live Virtual Course**
The Human Teratogens Course, organized by the Society for Birth Defects Research and Prevention (BDRP) is held on November 2–4, 2021, 10:00 AM–3:30 PM Eastern (US).

The course provides balanced and comprehensive information on the current knowledge and controversies in the field of teratology and counseling for pregnancy exposures. The faculty, teratology and toxicology experts, present lectures that cover basic principles of teratology, embryology, and epidemiology as well as detailed information regarding maternal conditions and environmental exposures which may pose teratogenic effect in pregnancy and lactation. The course provides up-to-date information on common exposures and hot topics, such as COVID-19 and vaccines, which providers are likely to encounter in their practice. The target audience for this course includes obstetricians, maternal fetal medicine specialists, teratogen information specialists, genetic counselors, pharmacists, and allied health professionals. Normally taking place every two years in Tampa, Florida, this year the international course will take place in a live virtual setting. Full details and registration are available on the [course website](https://www.birthdefects.org/courses/human-teratogens-courses/).

*World Birth Defects Day – WBDD, March 3rd*
Join World Birth Defects Day as **WBDD Partner Organization**, by completing the online application form on the WBDD website [https://www.worldbirthdefectsday.org/application-form/](https://www.worldbirthdefectsday.org/application-form/).

Follow @worldbdday on Twitter [https://twitter.com/WorldBDDay](https://twitter.com/WorldBDDay) and Instagram [https://www.instagram.com/worldbdday/](https://www.instagram.com/worldbdday/).

Join WBDD page on Facebook [https://www.facebook.com/WBDDay/](https://www.facebook.com/WBDDay/).

Visit WBDD website [https://www.worldbirthdefectsday.org/](https://www.worldbirthdefectsday.org/).

**A selection from the recent literature, and recommendations from readers**

*All readers are kindly invited to contribute to this section of the Newsletter, sending their suggestions to centre@icbdsr.org by the 1st Friday of the month*

**Causes: Risk factors, Protective Factors**

**COVID-19**


**Exposures and risk factors**


Genetics

Occurrence: prevalence, descriptive epidemiology


Outcomes: survival, morbidity, quality of life

Recommendations from readers
No recommendation this month

News from ICBDSR Executive Committee and ICBDSR Members

Online Self-Paced Course on Birth Defect Surveillance and Prevention
The online course remains available for interested professionals. The course has been developed by the International Centre on Birth Defects (ICBD Centre) and supported in part by funding from the National Center on Birth Defects and Developmental Disabilities, US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, through Agreement with the Task Force for Global Health. The course is designed for clinicians, epidemiologists, public health professionals, and anyone interested in understanding birth defects and improving their prevention and care. The course includes videos, quizzes, a discussion forum, and publications/resources. It is available in English and Spanish. To date, more than 500 trainees from 65 countries have joined the online course. Additional information is available at http://www.icbdsr.org/online-self-paced-course-on-birth-defect-surveillance-and-prevention/. The registration form is available at www.icbdsr.org/course-registration.
Once registered, you will receive an email with guidance on how to register in the course platform [www.icbdsrtraining.org](http://www.icbdsrtraining.org) and how to self-enroll in the self-paced course in either English or Spanish.

**Meetings and Conferences**

**World Congress of Epidemiology WCE 2020** scheduled to be held in Melbourne during September 2020, will be held as a virtual event on September 3-6, 2021. The Conference will focus on “Methodological Innovations in Epidemiology” which reflects the innovative progress in Epidemiology and Public Health [https://wce2020.org/](https://wce2020.org/)

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