



International Clearinghouse for Birth Defects Surveillance and Research Monthly Newsletter

September 2021

Issue 2021-09

ICBDSR ANNUAL MEETING

The 47th **ICBDSR Annual Meeting** will be held as **virtual meeting on October 11th, 2021**, from 10 a.m. to 12 p.m. US EDT – you can check your time zone schedule: go to [2021 ICBDSR Annual Meeting](#) and look at the Agenda. The viewing is in US EDT (Eastern Daylight Time), but you can click on “Adjust” and see your local time, according to the geolocation of the device you are using.

The ICBDSR Annual Meeting Committee has put together an outstanding program around the meeting theme which is the impact of Covid-19 pandemic on selected maternal and child health issues, including birth defects. Additional sessions on ICBDSR activities are also scheduled.

Complete details about the meeting program, speakers, registration (*no registration fee is required*), and more are available on the event website: [2021 ICBDSR Annual Meeting](#).

We hope that you will join us online. Spread the word and invite your colleagues to participate as well. The meeting is open to anyone interested in birth defects surveillance and research, i.e. medical doctors, epidemiologists, researchers, parents, health workers.

NEWS AND UPDATE ON COVID-19

European Centre for Disease Prevention and Control (ECDC)

Covid 19 Dataset: data on the daily number of new reported COVID-19 cases and deaths by EU/EEA country is available to download. ECDC continues to publish weekly updates on the number of cases and deaths reported in the EU/EEA and worldwide every Thursday. <https://www.ecdc.europa.eu/en/covid-19/data>

American Academy of Pediatrics - Children and COVID-19: State-Level Data Report

State-level reports are the best publicly available and timely data on child COVID-19 cases in the United States. The American Academy of Pediatrics and the Children’s Hospital Association are collaborating to collect and share all publicly available data from states on child COVID-19 cases. Here a summary of findings (data available as of September 23, 2021):

<https://www.aap.org/en/pages/2019-novel-coronavirus-covid-19-infections/children-and-covid-19-state-level-data-report/>

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/>.

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>).

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. Some timely news for this month (personal selection) – on COVID vaccines and on folic acid.

CDC Report: Covid vaccines don’t increase risk of miscarriage or birth defects. The CDC tracked 1,613 pregnant women who received a Covid-19 vaccine, 30% of whom were vaccinated in the second trimester. The remaining 70% received their inoculations in the third trimester. Participants gave birth to 1,634 infants.

The 1,613 participants were part of the CDC’s v-safe pregnancy registry, which had 5,096 enrollees as of Sept. 13. The rate of miscarriages were normal for the underlying population, adjusting for maternal age. Among the 1,634 babies Olson, 45 were considered small for their gestational age and 158 required intensive care. There were no infant fatalities in the group. Just 45 babies in the group were born with birth defects, with no reported uncommon types or clusters of birth defects.

Folic acid to be added to UK flour to help prevent birth defects

<https://www.bbc.com/news/health-58615838>

Recommendations are already in place in the UK to take folic acid to reduced the risk for spina bifida and anencephaly. Now the UK government has announced that folic acid will be added to flour (with some exceptions, including gluten-free foods and whole meal flour exempt).

The government ran a public consultation in 2019 around the issues of mandatory fortification. Neural tube defects affect about 1,000 pregnancies per year in the UK and cause a preventable burden of death, morbidity, and disability.

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](#)



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/>.

Follow @worldbdday on Twitter <https://twitter.com/WorldBDDay> and

Instagram worldbdday <https://www.instagram.com/worldbdday/>.

Join WBDD page on Facebook <https://www.facebook.com/WBDDay/>.

Visit WBDD website <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

Exposures and risk factors

Bolin EH, Gokun Y, Romitti PA, Tinker SC, Summers AD, Roberson PK, Hobbs CA, Malik S, Botto LD, Nembhard WN; National Birth Defects Prevention Study. [Maternal Smoking and Congenital Heart Defects, National Birth Defects Prevention Study, 1997-2011](#). J Pediatr. 2021 Sep 8:S0022-3476(21)00877-5. doi: 10.1016/j.jpeds.2021.09.005. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34508749.

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COVID-19

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Genetics

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Outcomes: survival, morbidity, quality of life

Benjamin NL, McKernan G, Izzo S, Crytzer TM, Clayton GH, Wilson PE, Houtrow AJ, Dicianno BE. [Factors Associated with Ambulation and Transfer Ability: A Study from the National Spina Bifida Patient Registry](#). Am J Phys Med Rehabil. 2021 Sep 9. doi: 10.1097/PHM.0000000000001879. Epub ahead of print. PMID: 34508059.

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Recommendations from readers

Liu S, Evans J, Boutin A, Luo W, Gheorghie M, Auger N, Arbour L, Moore A, Joseph KS, Little J. [Time trends, geographic variation and risk factors for gastroschisis in Canada: A population-based cohort study 2006-2017](#). Paediatr Perinat Epidemiol. 2021;00:1-10.

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 and how to self-enroll in the self-paced course in either English or Spanish.

Meetings and Conferences

Structural Birth Defects Trainee Symposium (Virtual symposium), November 2, 2021 10am-6pm ET
https://www.sdbonline.org/12th_structural_birth_defects_conference

2021 American Academy of Pediatrics National Conference & Exhibition (virtual conference), 8-11 October 2021. <https://aapexperience.org/>

Global Experts Meeting on Pediatrics & Neonatology:"Recent advancements and emerging technologies for Pediatrics", 25-27 April 2022, Las Vegas, USA <https://frontiersmeetings.com/conferences/pediatrics/>

16th Congress of the European Society of Contraception and Reproductive Health, 25-28 May 2022, Ghent, Belgium - Challenging times, are we ready? Novel approaches to sexual and reproductive health. <https://escrh.eu/event/16th-esc-congress/>

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