



The Lead Education and Abatement Design Group
Working to eliminate lead poisoning globally and to protect
the environment from lead in all its uses: past, current and new uses
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Spotlight on High Cases of Lead Poisoning in China

Mass poisoning from lead in China is the focus of the LEAD Group's June 2011 e-newsletter '[China and Rosebery Re-visited.](#)'

Almost simultaneously, the Sydney Morning Herald's '[Cover-up over millions of children poisoned by lead](#)' was published, on June 16. Research by LEAD Group interns from Macquarie University, featured in the latest LEAD Group newsletter, confirms that children in China are at risk, and looks into sources of lead poisoning in that country. These go beyond pollution from lead smelters, and include traditional foods and medicines.

'The Chinese central government seems unable to control the incidence of poisoning by heavy metals, due largely to corruption in the provinces,' says Elizabeth O'Brien, publisher of the newsletter.

'About 34% of Chinese children have blood lead levels that exceed the WHO limit for so-called safe levels of lead in blood of 10µg/dL,' she says. 'This is in comparison to the less than 1% of children in the US that have levels above the WHO limit.'

'China is so vast, the population so huge and economic development is taking place so quickly, that the safety of workers and residents seems to come second.'

Ms O'Brien said that China has been tightening regulations over the use of lead. However, implementation and enforcement lag behind.

'For example, even though leaded petrol was banned in 1999, it was still available in 2008, especially in the western provinces. Factories operate illegally, or do not meet environmental standards. Many discharge lead waste into rivers and the atmosphere, and rely on provincial governments to turn a blind eye, because these factories generate tax revenue.

'I call on the World Health Organisation and the UN to set up a global blood lead surveillance system to determine priorities for advice and assistance to national governments. My greatest concern is that there are more lead poisoned people in India even than China.'

END OF MEDIA RELEASE

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