

International Programme on Chemical Safety

**GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF THE STATE-OF-THE-SCIENCE
OF ENDOCRINE DISRUPTORS**

*An assessment prepared by an expert group on behalf of the World Health Organization,
the International Labour Organisation, and the United Nations Environment Programme*

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The International Programme on Chemical Safety (IPCS), established in 1980, is a joint venture of the United Nations Environment Programme (UNEP), the International Labour Organisation (ILO), and the World Health Organization (WHO). The overall objectives of the IPCS are to establish the scientific basis for assessing the risk to human health and the environment from exposure to chemicals, through international peer-review processes, as a prerequisite for the promotion of chemical safety, and to provide technical assistance in strengthening national capacities for the sound management of chemicals.

The Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals (IOMC) was established in 1995 by UNEP, ILO, the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations, WHO, the United Nations Industrial Development Organization, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research, and the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (Participating Organizations), following recommendations made by the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development to strengthen cooperation and increase coordination in the field of chemical safety. The purpose of the IOMC is to promote coordination of the policies and activities pursued by the Participating Organizations, jointly or separately, to achieve the sound management of chemicals in relation to human health and the environment.

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Preface	iii
1. Executive Summary	1
1.1 Purpose and Scope of Document	1
1.2 Endocrine Mechanisms of Action	1
1.3 Dose–Response Relationships	2
1.4 Effects in Wildlife	2
1.5 Human Health Effects	2
1.6 Exposure	3
1.7 Causal Criteria and Weight of Evidence for Effects Resulting from Exposure to EDCs	3
2. Introduction/Background	5
2.1 General Background	5
2.2 Generic Issues	5
2.3 Mechanisms of Endocrine Disruption in Humans and Wildlife	5
2.4 Dose–Response Relationships	7
2.5 Exposure Issues	8
3. Endocrinology and Endocrine Toxicology	11
3.1 Introduction to Endocrine Systems	11
3.2 Scope and Terminology	11
3.2.1 Overview	11
3.2.2 Homeostasis	12
3.2.3 Programming of Endocrine Axes	12
3.2.4 Impact of Endocrine Disruptors	13
3.3 The HPG Axis in Mammals	13
3.3.1 Overview of the HPG Axis	13
3.3.2 Target Cell Sensitivity	14
3.3.3 Metabolism of Endocrine Hormones	14
3.3.4 Interaction of Paracrine and Endocrine Components of the HPG Axis	14
3.3.5 Developmental Role of the HPG Axis	14
3.3.6 Role of Hormones in Mammalian Sex Differentiation	15
3.3.7 The HPG Axis in Nonmammalian Species	16
3.4 The HPA Axis	17
3.4.1 Overview of the HPA Axis	17
3.4.2 The HPA Axis in Nonmammals	17
3.5 The HPT Axis	17
3.5.1 Overview of the HPT Axis	17
3.5.2 The HPT Axis in Nonmammals	18
3.6 The Pineal Gland: A Photoperiodic Transducer	18
3.7 Interactions of the HPG Axis with Other Endocrine Systems	18
3.8 Growth in Understanding of Endocrine Systems	19
3.9 Developmental/Programming Effects of Endocrine Systems	19
3.10 Nonreproductive Effects of Sex Steroids	19
3.11 Endocrine Cross Talk and Endocrine Disruptors	20

3.12 Modes of Action and Phenotypic Outcomes of EDC-Related Developmental and Reproductive Toxicities	21
3.12.1 Scope of Survey	21
3.12.2 AR-Mediated (Anti)Androgens	21
3.12.3 ER-Mediated Estrogens	23
3.12.4 Inhibitors of Steroid Hormone Synthesis	25
3.12.5 AhR Agonists: TCDD, PCBs, and PCDFs	27
3.12.6 Mechanism for <i>p,p'</i> -DDE-Induced Eggshell Thinning in Oviparous Vertebrates	28
3.13 EDC Modes of Action for Carcinogenesis—The Effect of Atrazine	29
3.14 EDC-Related Modes of Action in Neurotoxicity	30
3.14.1 Overview	30
3.14.2 Sexual Differentiation of the Nervous System	31
3.15 EDC-Related Modes of Action in Immunotoxicity	31
3.16 Basis for Attribution of Effects to Endocrine Disruption	32
4. Wildlife	34
4.1 Mammals	34
4.1.1 Unique Aspects	34
4.1.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	34
4.1.3 Conclusion	36
4.2 Birds	36
4.2.1 Unique Aspects	36
4.2.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	36
4.2.3 Conclusion	38
4.3 Reptiles	39
4.3.1 Unique Aspects	39
4.3.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	39
4.3.3 Conclusion	40
4.4 Amphibians	40
4.4.1 Unique Aspects	40
4.4.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	41
4.4.3 Conclusion	42
4.5 Fish	42
4.5.1 Unique Aspects	42
4.5.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	42
4.5.3 Conclusion	47
4.6 Invertebrates	47
4.6.1 Unique Aspects	47
4.6.2 Effect-Based Responses and Case Studies	48
4.6.3 Conclusion	49
4.7 Uncertainties and Research Needs	49
5. Human Health	51
5.1 Reproduction	51
5.1.1 Introduction	51
5.1.2 Sperm Quality and Testis Function	52
5.1.3 Fecundity and Fertility	57
5.1.4 Spontaneous Abortion	58
5.1.5 The Sex Ratio	59
5.1.6 Male Reproductive Tract Abnormalities	61
5.1.7 Endometriosis	66
5.1.8 Other Adverse Reproductive Outcomes Potentially Linked to EDCs	68
5.1.9 Conclusions and Recommendations on Reproduction	69

5.2	Neurobehavior	70
5.2.1	Introduction	70
5.2.2	Human Data	70
5.2.3	Animal Data	72
5.2.4	Thyroid Hormones	73
5.2.5	Conclusions and Recommendations on Neurobehavior	75
5.3	Immune System	75
5.3.1	Introduction	75
5.3.2	Human Data	76
5.3.3	Experimental and Animal Data	77
5.3.4	Conclusions and Recommendations on the Immune System	78
5.4	Cancer	78
5.4.1	Introduction	78
5.4.2	Breast Cancer	79
5.4.3	Endometrial Cancer	84
5.4.4	Testicular Cancer	84
5.4.5	Prostate Cancer	85
5.4.6	Thyroid Cancer	86
5.4.7	Conclusions and Recommendations on Cancer	86
5.5	Other Endocrine Systems Potentially Vulnerable to EDCs	86
6.	Exposure of Selected Potential EDCs in Humans and Wildlife	89
6.1	Introduction	89
6.2	General Exposure Issues	90
6.2.1	Sources	90
6.2.2	Exposure Pathways	91
6.2.3	Intake and Uptake	92
6.2.4	Internal Dose and Pharmacokinetics	92
6.3	Case Studies	92
6.3.1	Wildlife Exposures	93
6.3.2	Human Exposures—Some Selected Case Studies	98
6.4	Measurement of Exposure to EDCs	101
6.4.1	Sampling	102
6.4.2	Analytical Considerations	102
6.4.3	Mixtures	103
6.4.4	QA/QC	104
6.4.5	Exposure Models	104
6.4.6	SARs	104
6.5	Summary	105
	Annex I	106
7.	Causal Criteria for Assessing Endocrine Disruptors—A Proposed Framework	123
7.1	Introduction	123
7.2	Elements of the Proposed Framework	123
7.3	Overall Strength of Evidence	124
7.4	Illustrative Examples—Status and Trends Observations	124
7.4.1	Semen Quality and Testis Function in Humans	124
7.4.2	Limb Malformations in North American Frogs	125

7.5	Illustrative Examples—Nonstatus and Trend-Type Observations	125
7.5.1	Endometriosis in Humans	125
7.5.2	Impaired Neurobehavioral Development in Humans	125
7.5.3	Perturbed Immune Function in Humans	126
7.5.4	Incidence of Breast Cancer in Humans	126
7.5.5	Imposex in Marine Gastropods	126
7.5.6	Decreased Reproductive Function in Baltic Seals	127
7.5.7	GLEMEDS	127
7.5.8	Eggshell Thinning in Colonial Waterbirds	127
7.5.9	Reproductive Abnormalities in Lake Apopka Alligators	128
7.5.10	Vitellogenin Induction in Fish Exposed to Sewage Treatment Plant Effluents in England	128
7.5.11	Developmental Abnormalities and Reproductive Failure in Lake Ontario Lake Trout	128
7.5.12	Reproductive Alterations in Fish Exposed to Bleached Kraft Pulp Mill Effluent in Ontario	129
8.	General Conclusions and Research Needs	131
	References	133

Global concerns have been raised in recent years over the potential adverse effects that may result from exposure to chemicals that have the potential to interfere with the endocrine system. Wildlife and human health effects of EDCs were first proclaimed by Rachel Carson in 1962, and based on a growing body of knowledge, those concerns have increased. This concern regarding EDCs is directed at both humans and wildlife. In response to these concerns, the Second Session (February 1997) of the Intergovernmental Forum on Chemical Safety made a number of recommendations to the Member Organizations of the IOMC, notably, IPCS and OECD, concerning approaches and means for coordinating and/or supporting efforts to address the issues internationally, including the development of an international inventory of research and coordinated testing and assessment strategies. This endorsed earlier recommendations from an international workshop at the Smithsonian (January 1997) and was followed by the 1997 Declaration of the Environmental Leaders of the Eight on Children's Environmental Health, which specifically addressed the issue of EDCs in their declaration. The environment leaders encouraged continuing efforts to compile an international inventory of research activities, develop an international assessment of the state of the science, identify and prioritize research needs and data gaps, and develop a mechanism for coordinating and cooperating on filing of the research needs. The 50th World Health Assembly adopted resolution WHO 50.13 in 1997, which called upon the Director-General of WHO to "take the necessary steps to reinforce WHO leadership in undertaking risk assessment as a basis for tackling high priority problems as they emerge, and in promoting and coordinating related research, for example, on potential endocrine-related health effects of exposure to chemicals."

List of Abbreviations

EDCs	Endocrine-disrupting chemicals
ILO	International Labour Organization
IOMC	Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals
IPCS	International Programme on Chemical Safety
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
UNEP	United Nations Environment Programme
USA	United States of America
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
WHO	World Health Organization

In response to these recommendations, the International Programme on Chemical Safety (PCS) of the WHO/UNEP/ILO assumed responsibility for developing this global assessment of the current state of scientific knowledge relative to environmental endocrine disruption. Concurrently, the IPCS assisted in the development of a Global Endocrine Disruptor Research Inventory (see <http://endocrine.ei.jrc.it>), which serves as a tool to foster complementary research efforts and identify strengths and weaknesses of current global research efforts.

The IPCS (in collaboration with the OECD) convened an informal consultation in 1997 and a Scoping Meeting in 1998 to outline the objectives, scope, and development process for the assessment document. The IPCS established a Steering Group of the following scientific experts to provide oversight, expertise, and guidance for the project and to evaluate the accuracy, significance, and relevance of the information in the document.

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IPCS GLOBAL ASSESSMENT OF EDCs

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