

Coinciding with the visit of the Scientific Advisory Council and the 1st International Symposium about Environmental Epidemiology

Inauguration of the Environmental Epidemiology Research Centre (CREAL)

Barcelona, 3 October 2007- Tomorrow, Thursday 4 October, the institutional event will take place for the opening of the Environmental Epidemiology Research Centre (CREAL). The inauguration will be presided over by the Honourable Mrs Marina Geli, Health Councillor of the Generalitat de Catalunya and other participants will include representatives from the Department of Innovation, Universities & Business, from the Department of the Environment and Housing, from the Municipal Institute of Health Care Services and from the Pompeu Fabra University.

This institutional inauguration coincides with the new location of the CREAL in the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park and with the first meeting of the CREAL Scientific Advisory Council, which will evaluate the evolution of this initial stage of the centre and will make recommendations.

The Scientific Advisory Council, led by Prof. John Samet, Director of the Epidemiology Department of the John Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health (USA), brings together internationally-renowned experts in the research lines that CREAL works with. The council will also take part in the 1st International Symposium of Environmental Epidemiology (<http://www.creal.cat/CREALSymp.htm>), which will start after the inauguration.

CREAL, led by Dr. Josep Maria Antó, was founded in 2006. It is a joint initiative of the Generalitat de Catalunya (Department of Health and Department of Innovation, Universities and Business), the Municipal Institute of Health Care Services (IMAS) and Pompeu Fabra University (UPF). The centre has inherited a trajectory in environmental epidemiology research initially advanced by the IMIM Respiratory and Environmental Research Unit (URRA).

Commitment to Environmental Health

In its first two years of history, CREAL has amply proven its mission to be an international reference in research lines with great relevance for the public health of our society. In this respect, one of its priority objectives is to combine theoretical and practical research, so that knowledge acquisition translates into health care and environmental policies that lead to the reduction of illnesses caused by environmental factors and to improving the quality of life of everybody.

Its research lines are developed around three main pillars:

- The prevention of respiratory diseases, through the examination of the environmental determinants in lung diseases and by researching workplace risk factors.
The environmental factors related to the appearance of illnesses like asthma and chronic obstructive lung disease (COLD) are being analysed. Workplace risks are also under study that is related to the appearance of these diseases, as well as the interaction between genetic and environmental factors.
- Cancer studies, with respect to workplace, environmental and contaminating substance factors.

These are centred primarily on analysing the causes of urinary tract cancer related to environmental factors, such as the presence of contaminants in drinking water. It also collaborates with other Spanish and European centres that study the contribution of workplace factors to the appearance of other types of tumours.

- The evaluation of environmental contamination effects on children's health. This line researches the effects of several types of contamination, such as different chemical contaminants, atmospheric contamination and exposure to allergens on the neurocognitive and immunological development of children.

Meriting mention is the fact that CREAL houses the coordinating centre of CIBERESP, a consortium of 41 Spanish research groups financed by ISC III, as well as the recent signing of an important agreement with the Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (Inserm), to create the Laboratori Internacional en Epidemiologia Respiratòria (ILRE), thus joining forces at a European level to promote research in the field of respiratory epidemiology and combat the increase of obstructive pulmonary diseases and asthma.

Relevant recent studies

Some of the most recent working lines for which CREAL has presented important conclusions are:

- The study 'The benefits for public health of the reduction of atmospheric contamination in the metropolitan area of Barcelona', presented on 19 September. http://www.creal.cat/convoca_premsa_cat.htm
- The coordination and presentation of the results of the first large international study about new cases of workplace asthma. http://www.creal.cat/pdf/dossier_lancet_def_cat.pdf
- The coordination of the ambitious international study HI-WATE, published in 'The Lancet', about the potential long-term risk stemming from exposure to low levels of disinfectants employed in drinking water for human consumption and the food industry. <http://www.imim.es/news/news-cat?q=30082>
- The study on the impact of regular physical activity on the risk of suffering chronic obstructive lung disease, which was published in the American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine. <http://www.imim.es/news/news-cat?q=30100>

Inauguration date: Thursday, 4 October 2007

Time: 9.00 am

Location: Auditorium of the Barcelona Biomedical Research Park (Dr. Aiguader, 88)

For further information

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