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Conference Henvi 2008



International Conference
Health Aspects of Indoor and Outdoor Air Pollution

Yesterday I spent the full day at the International Conference on Health Aspects of Indoor and Outdoor Air Pollution organized by the CRPGL. I presented a short poster session on "10 years ground ozone measurements at meteoLCD" (see [here](#)). There were a lot of oral presentations on the impact of various air pollutants on asthma and allergy. Some were interesting, some sleep inducing and a few were unbelievable bad. I will comment a subset of the presentations.

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Professor **Forsberg** from Umea (Sweden) gave a negative correlation of -0.40 between ground O₃ and NO_x found in Goeteborg that is exactly the same as I found in 10 years meteoLCD measurements.

Prof. **Bernard** from the University of Louvain provoked quite some eye-brow rising as he focused nearly exclusively on the nefarious influence of chlorine gas and its derivatives in the air of (indoor) swimming pools. He had some plausible data showing that asthma risk might increase by a staggering **80%** for children going often for a swim (or being forced to do that during their school time). There seems to be a plateau between risk and frequency of visits; the fact remains (according to Bernard) that the swimming-pool risk eclipses all other risk for asthma in children, like house dust or mites.

One of the worst presentations was given by Dr. **Koppen** from VITO. She talked on the influence of pollutants like NO₂ on bio-markers and asthma risk factors. The slides were riddled with typing and/or spelling errors. The correlations (R²) computed to show the influence of pollutants were abysmal (0.009 for instance); a majority of graphs shown to demonstrate a relationship resembled swarms of flies dropped dead, with a totally meaningless linear regression line drawn by the statistics software (I recognized Statistica).

The presentation by Marc **Fischer** and Ralph **Baden** from the National Health Laboratory were a highlight: extremely well done slides, good spoken English and an interesting subject: persistence and out-gassing of flame retardants or permethrin from furniture or bed mattresses.

Another interesting presentation was given by Andreas **Krein** from the CRPGL. He drove a car through the town of Esch-Alzette and sampled dust particles (PM_{2.5} and PM₁₀) with open and closed windows, AC running. The data showed that the AC did not filter out these particles.

The second worst presentation was the final one given by European Commission employee Dr. S. **Kephalopoulos** from the Institute for Health and Consumer Protection at Ispra (Italy). Speaking like a machine gun, his English was nearly incomprehensible. The slides were mostly unreadable copies made from paper originals. Everybody gave a sigh of relief when this torture was finished.

The conference ended with a "table ronde" chaired by the Luxembourg MP Jean **Huss** (Green Party). He is knowledgeable on allergies and pollutants, but as many greens has serious problems with orders of magnitude. He absolutely wanted to hear from the scientists that small doses of a pollutant might be **more** dangerous than large ones; as nobody jumped on this train, M. Huss was somehow dissatisfied. I left the conference at this point.

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