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People with Toxic Injury, Environmental NGOs and Scientists ask the WHO for the Official Recognition of Two Environmental Illnesses: MCS and EHS

Press Release

Alicante, 6th May 2011 - The representatives of NGOs working for the recognition of **Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS)** and **Electromagnetic Hypersensitivity (EHS)**, announce that there will be a meeting on 13rd May at the WHO headquarter with **Maria Neira**, Public Health and Environment Director. The NGOs will present the petition addressed to WHO asking for the recognition of these two environmental illnesses and the scientific evidence about these two conditions in order to obtain their inclusion in International Classification of Diseases, ICD-10.

The petition received the support from 26 countries more than 200 Health experts and more than 240 NGOs, foundations and associations worried by Health and Environment



At the meeting in Genève there will be:

- two representatives of patients organizations - Francisca Gutiérrez Clavero, President of the Spanish NGO ASQUIFYDE and Francesca Romana Orlando, Vice President of the Italian Association for Environmental and Chronic Toxic Injury (AMICA);
- scientists working on MCS/EHS: Dr. Anunciación Lafuente, who is President of the Spanish Society of Toxicology, Professor of Toxicology at the University of Vigo and member of the Working Group at the Ministry of Health which is developing the Consensus Document on MCS in Spain; Dr. Julián Márquez, Neurophysiologist (retired from Public Health Service, in private practice), Former Director of the Department of Neurophysiology at the Bellvitge Hospital in Barcelona, with a long time experience with MCS patients, Member of the Working Group in the Ministry of Health which is developing the Consensus Document on MCS in Spain; Dr. Chiara De Luca, Director of the BILARA (BILancio Radicalico e Antiossidante) Laboratory at the Istituto Dermopatico dell'Immacolata in Rome, who published significant studies about the role of oxidative stress in MCS patients;
- Two Spanish attorneys: Jaume Cortés and Sonia Ortiga.

According to the NGOs, the lack of an ICD-10 code for MCS and EHS leaves millions of people without a correct diagnosis and it prevents governments from taking adequate health support and preventive policies.

"MCS and EHS are included by many scientists in a group of diseases sharing the sensitization of the central nervous system, such as Fibromyalgia (FM) and Chronic Fatigue Syndrome (CFS). According to the majority of scientists, this sensitization is

triggered by environmental factors - Francisca G. Clavero, President of Asquifyde, explains - but, while FM and CFS are classified in the International Classification of Diseases ICD-10, MCS and EHS still are not, except for Germany, Austria and Japan, where MCS is included”.

These conditions have a significant prevalence. According to different studies, about 15% of the (Kreutzer, R.; Neutra, RR.; Lashuay, N. Prevalence of people reporting sensitivities to chemicals in a population-based survey. Am J Epidemiol. 1999 Jul; 150(1):1-12, Caress & Steinemann, 2003) population is chemically sensitive to chemicals in consumer products, with a smaller group having a disabling level of MCS; the prevalence of EHS is about 3-6 % in the general population, but the statistics are very different among countries.

“The recognition of these two illnesses would also have a global impact on financial savings in terms of health care expenditure, because a correct diagnosis is the first step to prevent people from becoming severely ill or disabled, especially in the case of environmentally triggered illnesses”, F. G. Clavero concludes.

“WHO, the most important international health agency, can not delay any more the listing of MCS and EHS in the ICD chapter of environmental illnesses, because the scientific evidence is clear, especially when one is able to distinguish the independent research from the scientific papers produced by scientists with industry ties”, Francesca Romana Orlando, Vice President of AMICA and authoress of a book about conflict of interest in public health policies, declares.

“Nowadays people with MCS or EHS are treated symptomatically because the medical professionals are not fully trained in environmental medicine, but addressing the symptoms means to miss the real point of these conditions: the most convincing proof of the environmental origin of these two conditions is the fact that avoiding the triggering agents – respectively chemicals and EMF – very often helps to keep the symptoms under control. The WHO recognition would also promote further research in this field”, Francesca R. Orlando adds.

After the meeting at 10:00 with Dr. Neira, there will be a press conference at 11:30 at WHO.

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