

Backgrounder - No link between clean homes and childhood asthma, explains UKCPI Posted September 2008

Some parents may have been concerned by some media reports, based on a Study published in the European Respiratory Journal (ERJ)⁽¹⁾, which suggest an apparent link between cleaning chemicals and child asthma. The UKCPI points out that **household cleaning products, far from causing health problems, do much to make home life clean, safe and wholesome.** Asthma experts stress the importance of keeping the home clean to minimise asthma symptoms. Indeed by law, any product sold for use by consumers, is tightly regulated and that the safety, quality and efficacy of cleaning products are the primary concerns of our Industry.

Of course, the media citing the article would not have been aware that the data on which the ERJ article has been based, originates from the Avon Longitudinal Study of Parents and Children (ALSPAC) which started in the early 1990s. In a paper due to be published, entitled '*Applicability of epidemiological methods to the assessment of the risk to human health of indoor air pollution: A critical review*⁽²⁾', it is pointed out that '*epidemiological methods for quantifying health impacts involve many assumptions and have inherent uncertainties*'⁽¹⁾.

The ALSPAC study is no exception, not the least because of its use of questionnaires and their inherent susceptibility to recall bias. Studies such as ALSPAC, although useful for the collection of baseline data, have limited capabilities for researching the hypothesis that cleaning chemicals contribute to asthma in children, and in fact **epidemiological studies such as this one do not determine causal linkages.**

Dr Andy Williams, Director General of UKCPI, the leading Trade Association representing UK manufacturers of cleaning, hygiene and surface care products, said: "People can be confident of the safety, quality and efficacy of cleaning products on sale in the UK. Indeed, our homes and our health would be the poorer without modern cleaning methods".

(1). Henderson J, Sherriff A, Farrow A & Ayres JG: Household chemicals, persistent wheezing and lung function: Effect modification by atopy?

(2). Brown T, Holmes P & Harrison PTC (In Press) The applicability of epidemiological methods to the assessment of the risks to human health of indoor air pollution: a critical review. Indoor Air

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