



"Prevention is better than cure", I was a firefighter for about 10 years and a few years into that career we started doing home fire safety visits. We'd visit homes, do an assessment of their fire risk and install free smoke detectors. The aim being earlier fire detection and less people to rescue. Some of my colleagues thought that this was counter intuitive to our role and we were trying to put ourselves out of work. But the overarching feeling was that "prevention was better than cure".

After seeing Cleft Palate TV campaign recently we signed up to support one person having surgery per year but it appeared the scale of the issue is far greater that I could have appreciated.

I've been an occupational (industrial) hygienist for 30 years. Discussing the scale got the Cleft issue with my wife, who is also a trained Midwife, we concluded that a proportion of could have be due to exposure to teratogens of the baby the first trimester of the pregnancy and a proportion of those could've been workplace exposure.

A cursory metadata analysis of academic papers confirmed our suspicion and I found a few that link cleft palate, through occupation exposure to various chemicals, in the first trimester of pregnancy. The chemical list includes aliphatic aldehydes*, glycol ether*, lead compounds**,aliphatic acids**, biocides***, anti-neoplastic drugs***,trichloroethylene***, organic solvents*** and Polycyclic Aromatic Hydrocarbon (PAH)***.

* Orofacial clefts

** Cleft Palate only

*** Cleft lip with or without Cleft palate.

I am a Trustee of the UK branch of Workplace Health Without Borders (WHWB-UK), with my primary role being communication and identifying projects.

The ethos of Occupational Hygiene is that everyone deserves to go home from work each day as healthy as they arrived, which included in this scenario, would include the embryo or foetus.

We've initiated a project team to develop a campaign to reach our target audience.

Please watch this space for new developments