

TOXIC HOT SPOTS: A GLOBAL HEALTH THREAT

Toxic Hot Spots are areas where the concentration of toxic substances, which may be present in water, soil or air, is significantly higher than background levels. In these areas, the risk of adverse health effects is elevated. Toxic hot spots are often located in the vicinity of landfills, car battery recycling sites, sewage treatment plants, refineries, tanneries, mines, and numerous other operations. Living nearby these sites may cause serious adverse affects, as for example cancer and retardation in children.

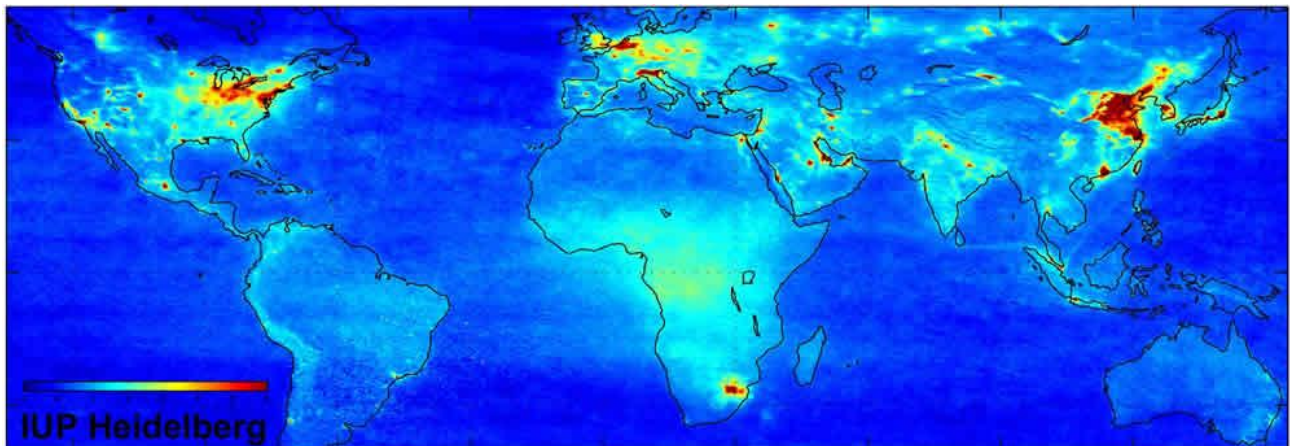
We usually think of infectious diseases as the major global health problem. However, a new study by Kevin Chatham-Stephens and collaborators, published this month in *Environmental Health Perspectives*, shows that living near a toxic hot spot may lead to a higher health threat than some of the most dangerous infectious diseases worldwide, such as malaria and tuberculosis.

The study focuses on three countries, India, Indonesia, and the Philippines. The researchers estimate that more than eight million persons in these countries suffered disease, disability, or death resulting from exposures to industrial contaminants in 2010. The toxic substances causing the majority of negative health effects are lead and hexavalent chromium, a carcinogen.

The researchers conclude that “toxic waste sites are a major, and heretofore under-recognized, global health problem.”

The study results confirm the findings of the 2012 World’s Worst Pollution Problems report, which clearly shows the large extent of the global health impact of pollution.

The image below (from the University of Hedelberg) is a global map showing pollution hotspots around the world. In this case, the hotspots were located in 2004 through detection of nitrogen dioxide, which is released into the atmosphere from the burning of fossil fuels by power plants, heavy industry and vehicles.



Source: <http://theglobalfool.com/toxic-hot-spots-a-global-health-threat/>