

Support for patients with environmental complaints

Our database can be used, to a limited extent, for file-building for local groups and individuals. It often takes a long time to get authorities to clean up a polluted area. We collect relevant information and help people to organize their actions. MGM has built up a database of toxic substances and related biomarkers, combined with frequently asked and interesting questions and answers. Also we have developed guides and protocols for a number of frequently encountered problems and a manual for self-organization.

We bring together companions in misfortune, not only on the local level (i.e. waste incinerators), but also with regard to specific environmental sources of pollution spread over the entire country.

MGM supports people with specific vulnerabilities, for example allergies to certain fragrances, to get organized. In return, they encourage others to register their health problems into our database. Some groups are doing very well, for example the Self Help Group Multiple Chemical Sensitivity, an illness that causes a range of health complaints from even extreme low emissions of chemicals. Another successful group is the Foundation for Electro Hypersensitivity. MGM supports a governmental working group on LFN.

Often people living near a source of possible environmental problems, or people living in an area where a specific activity has been projected in the near future, ask our advice about health hazards. We can provide data from similar cases that were reported to us.

What can we do for your organization?

MGM can provide services like data management and analysis and can provide your organization with periodic overviews of the number and type of reports received through their portal.

Our goal/aim

MGM aims to contribute to the efforts of all organizations that support victims of environmental or occupational health-problems, prevention, or environmental justice.

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MGM

*Dutch
Organization
for
Monitoring
Environment
related Health
Problems*

*Early warnings
to environmental hazards*

What is MGM and what do we do?

MGM is the Dutch Organization for Monitoring Health and Environment, an independent foundation (NGO), that records cases of environment related health complaints. The idea is derived from the registration of side effects of pharmaceuticals. It provides valuable information about hazards that does not show up in preclinical and clinical studies. Exposure to a pharmaceutical differs from environmental and occupational exposure by a relatively high dose, a limited duration and a known dosage. In addition, toxic effect studies include both healthy and ill subjects. Yet, adverse side effects emerging after market introduction are quite common.

What we know about environmental hazards is derived from animal research, a number of environmental incidents, a few case control studies, even fewer longitudinal studies and evidence from occupational health studies. Environmental accidents provide mostly information about incidental exposure to a high dose and occupational exposure is limited to working hours and the adult working population. Vulnerable subjects tend to quit jobs that risk their health, which is why occupational health data provide a too optimistic picture of human capacity to endure environmental hazards. Systematic registration of environment-related health problems can contribute to our knowledge and understanding of environmental hazards and sound environmental health management.

Diseases and environmental factors are registered in a classification system

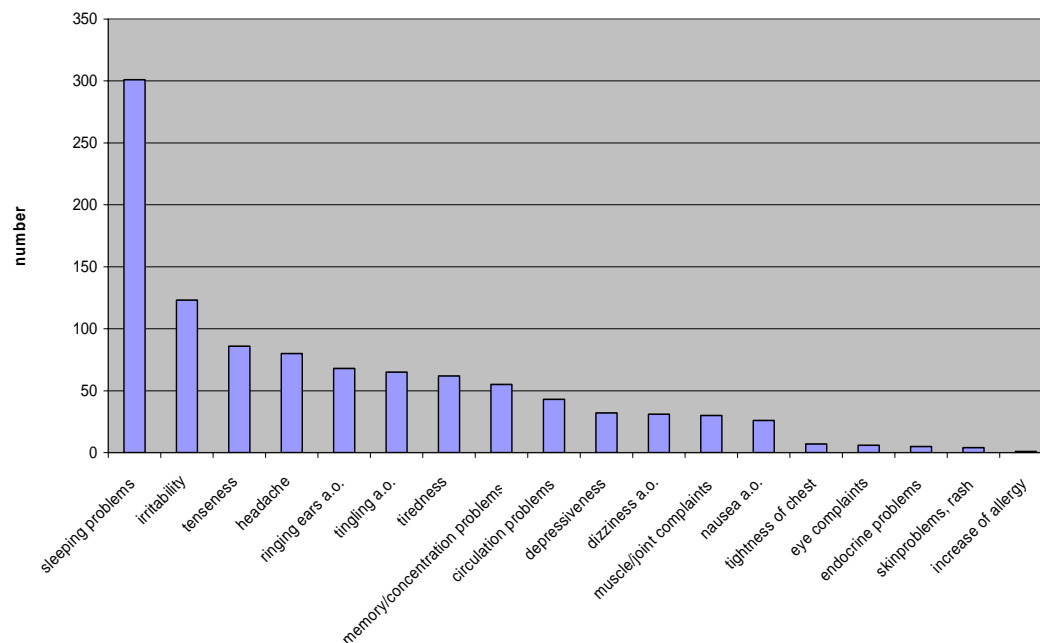
The core of our registration system is a concise questionnaire, including information on both symptoms and environmental factors. Diseases are encoded according to the International Classification of Primary Care system. The environmental factors are registered in a similar classification system, developed by MGM. This unique classification system is embedded in a custom made digital software program, easily usable for our registration team. An online registration form is available (in Dutch) on our website. With enough funding and interest from other countries, we can, in the future, also offer a registration form in English.

How do we use the database?

MGM uses the recorded data to identify local environmental problems that receive little attention from the authorities, vulnerable groups and unknown hazards of new technologies or new products. We found, that much more people tend to get ill from factors like smell and noise, than local authorities and environmental health experts tend to admit. We found that low frequency noise can cause considerable health problems to a specific vulnerable group. Since mobile phones have become popular and more and more antenna's and base stations are installed, we receive reports from all over the country of perceived health problems. We use these signals to alert the authorities and urge them to protect the population effectively and to research the issue thoroughly.

Our database partly represents a population of extra-vulnerable persons. Quite often MGM is asked to mediate with these persons to ask their consent to participate in scientific case control studies.

health complaints mentioned in connection to low frequency noise (n=462)



The MGM registration database does NOT provide representative geographical or epidemiological data. It cannot be used as an indicator for local environmental quality. Neither can the database support proof of cause and effect relations between environmental factors and complaints; the time lag between exposure and effect is often too long, or the environmental hazard is too complex to measure or to detect.