

# Bid to clean up the world

September 17 2013

---

An international scientific initiative aimed at reducing the impact of human-made pollution on the health and wellbeing of the whole world was launched in Melbourne, Australia, today.

The Global Contamination Research Initiative (GCRI) is a world-wide alliance of scientists, industry and regulators which aims to understand and curb human chemical emissions, which are causing widespread concern over major health effects around the world.

It was launched at CleanUp 2013, the leading international conference on contamination science and technology today.

"There is now clear evidence that human-made chemicals are spreading around the whole planet via air, soil, water, food, plants, animals, traded goods and in people themselves," said GCRI co-ordinator Professor Ravi Naidu of the University of South Australia and CRC CARE.

"Many of these substances are toxic: hundreds have been linked by science to cancer, heart disease, [brain disorders](#), obesity, infertility, child development and many other diseases.

"However the full extent of their distribution and their effect on the health of the [world population](#) and life on Earth in general remain largely unknown.

"This is a scientific challenge as large, or larger even, than [climate change](#) in that [carbon emissions](#) are only part of total human chemical

emissions from industry, mining, agriculture, energy production and other activities.

"The task of understanding and correcting this process is urgent. Yesterday we heard evidence from speakers that almost every baby born today comes into the world already contaminated by a hundred or so toxic [industrial chemicals](#) – and then is exposed to many more in its food, home environment and the air it breathes.

"Clearly this is an issue demanding immediate and worldwide research – but the current effort is fragmented across different countries, industries and disciplines. The idea behind GCRI is to help bring focus to a global effort to clean up our world."

Professor Naidu says that according to the United Nation Environment program, world chemical output is around 20 million metric tonnes, about one third of which is thought to be toxic or carcinogenic. This is growing at a rate of about 3 per cent per year.

"At the same time there are even larger emissions of toxic substances from mining and mineral production, energy production, fossil fuel use, agriculture, combustion engines and waste burning, about which we know remarkably little at global level.

"These chemicals, deliberate and unintentional, are being found from the peak of Mt Everest, to the snows of Antarctica, to the deep oceans. They are especially concentrated in the world's big cities, and in the soils and water used to grow our food supplies.

The Global Contamination Research Initiative (GCRI) is a worldwide knowledge network, performing new scientific research, aggregating existing knowledge, developing novel assessment and clean-up technologies, advising governments and industry on ways to improve

existing regulation or industry practices, training high-level experts and sharing knowledge about ways to reduce man-made contamination in all facets of society and the natural environment.

Some of the world's leading scientific institutions have indicated they wish to take part in GCRI, which is currently hosted by Australia's Cooperative Research Centre for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment (CRC CARE).

**More information:** [www.crccare.com/](http://www.crccare.com/)

Provided by CRC for Contamination Assessment and Remediation of the Environment

Citation: Bid to clean up the world (2013, September 17) retrieved 24 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2013-09-world.html>

<p>This document is subject to copyright. Apart from any fair dealing for the purpose of private study or research, no part may be reproduced without the written permission. The content is provided for information purposes only.</p>
--