

Preface



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Guest Editors

Children's environmental health is one of the up-and-coming challenges of the twenty-first century. Palfrey and colleagues [1] have coined the term "millennial morbidities" to describe the most pressing new morbidities of our time—disorders of the bioenvironmental interface, socioeconomic influences on health, health disparities, technological influences on health, overweight and obesity, and mental health issues. In the last century the progress in the treatment of previously identified health care problems in many pediatric subspecialties, although hardly complete, has been spectacular. We now are in an era in which factors that affect the health of children increasingly are identified before the damage is evident, as evidenced by our increasing abilities to identify prenatal and genetically based conditions. Similarly, the impacts of environmental exposures are being understood, and, perhaps more importantly, are being recognized by larger segments of the health professional community and the public alike. Pediatricians now have a responsibility to improve their recognition and understanding of these exposures and to assess and communicate to others the potential risks and threats that environmental exposures pose to children. Finally, this increased understanding underscores the increasing need for pediatricians to be able to act on behalf of children and to do so through increased familiarity with and access to resources that can be of practical benefit to doctors and patients alike.

The *Pediatric Clinics of North America* first published an issue on children's environmental health in 2001. New and increasingly sophisticated information in this field is already available. Expanded resources now exist to

support child health professionals. The previous publication thoughtfully addressed many of the more obvious and traditional subjects in this field, for the first time in one volume. In this and the previous issue of *Pediatric Clinics of North America*, we offer a collection of articles that address a wider range of environmental health issues that impact children in a number of settings as well as a discussion of issues that the public may bring to us as health professionals.

At the time of the original publication, the Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Units were just getting organized. Now a network of 12 units serves all regions of the United States as well as much of North America. Individuals from these units form the core of the group of authors for these issues of *Pediatric Clinics*. The expertise in each of the units individually and in all of the units cumulatively is exceedingly broad and serves as an important resource for education and clinical consultation.

The other articles in this issue of *Pediatric Clinics* are drawn from several of the Centers for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research located throughout the country. These centers are the research engine in the nascent but rapidly expanding field of children's health and the environment.

These new collections of articles should be highly relevant to the knowledge and work of medical, nursing, and public health professionals involved in all realms and specialties of pediatric health.

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Reference

- [1] Palfrey JS, Tonniges TF, Green M, et al. Introduction: addressing the millennial morbidity—the context of community pediatrics. *Pediatrics* 2005;115(4 Suppl):1121–3.