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A methodological proposal for the application of the best HIA model in a controversial context: waste incineration

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Background

Health Impact Assessment is a flexible tool to increase public knowledge and participation in the management of environment and health risks. It also widely contributes to collect, increase and interpret information on environment and health.

Aims

The pilot study under development establishes a collaboration between the National Research Council and the Emilia-Romagna Region to achieve two goals: 1) develop Guidelines for HIA to be applied to evaluate the impacts of incinerators and combustion plants, within the MONITER project; 2) identify the best HIA model among the available ones.

The best HIA model for incineration plants

Actions

1. Build up a protocol to highlight the relevant criteria for an effective HIA model implemented in the context of waste incineration plants;
2. Validate the selected model performing two rapid HIA in different temporal settings (retrospective and concurrent), in a selected area in the Emilia-Romagna region.

Activities

a) An in depth analysis of literature and selected materials to obtain a conceptual framework and thus build a HIA model focused on incineration health effects;

b) Synopsis representation of existing models to facilitate a comparison with the main requirements necessary to perform the best HIA. Main requirements are produced implementing a Model Selection Tool (an ad hoc validated questionnaire for the consensus development);

The best HIA model for incineration plants

Activities:

c) Application of selected models that meet fundamental requirements. A rapid retrospective HIA: to increase understanding of health impacts in the implementation of similar projects; to enlarge the evidence base for prospective HIAs; a Rapid concurrent HIA: to identify opportunities for improvement in the process trough the establishment of a comprehensive steering group involving an environment and health network still acting in the selected area.

d) Implementation of a Multi-Stage Analysis, based on the application of Delphy methodology to test the validity of selected models.

The best HIA model for incineration plants

Expected results

To identify the level of existing uncertainty and controversial views about the HIA application in the context of incineration and community health; to make available recommendations for the selection of a HIA best model in similar proposals.

Conclusions

Among the added values that can be obtained by the HIA process, we intend to identify procedures able to promote a transparent decision-making process and an extensive stakeholders participation; we also intend to rise awareness among decision makers, to include health into policy planning.