

Environmental Health

HEVirtanen et al. *APMIS* Feb. (2001) Vol. 109, #2 p 96.

A comparison of the current and historic incidence of hypospadias (HS) in Finland.

A prospective study in one Finnish hospital - 5798 boys were live born in the study period (1997 to 1999). Babies were examined by staff who had been specially trained. Cases that were Diagnosed by GPs and other carers were confirmed by re-examination.

Selection bias was thought to be minimal, though of course, problem pregnancies were more likely to be delivered in the central hospital.

Only 31% of mothers agreed to take part.

0.27% of live born boys had hypospadias i.e. 17 per 10,000 live births. Earlier work (1993 to 1998) gave a figure of 15 per 100,000. Surgical records for 1970 to 1986 show the same rate of care 0.28% of live born boys.

Comment

US studies tend to show progressive increases in serious cases of HS. This trend is not apparent in Finland.

US commentators tend to cite increasing exposure to environmental endocrine disrupters as the probable cause of their observed trend.

Apparently, surgical correction of the defect is usually uncomplicated, in infancy. Compensation claims would seem unlikely.

Strong evidence of environmental endocrine disrupters may be used to justify increasingly precautionary environmental regulation. Such evidence seems to be stronger in the US than in Finland.

