



Association pour la Recherche Thérapeutique Anti-Cancéreuse

THE ARTAC is an independent association of physicians and researchers specializing in the study biological, clinical and therapeutic cancer.

- ➔ The ARTAC relies on a **network of multidisciplinary researchers** whose common goal is the decline of the disease.
- ➔ This is the only French association for the fight against cancer to **promote environmental prevention**.
- ➔ At the heart of the priorities of the ARTAC: **the protection of pregnant women and children**.

July 10, 2008

For the first time in France, the collective mobilization of 531 doctors and environmental associations has succeeded in stopping a garbage incinerator. After organizing a local Grenelle incineration summit (Referring to the big governmental summit of Grenelle, a community in France) held on March 26th, 2008, the Regional prefect (equivalent of Mayor) of Auvergne has announced on June 18th that he is refusing to give an approval to construct for a company wanting to build a garbage incinerator in Clermont Ferrand. The actions taken by Dr. Jean-Michel Calut, spokesperson for the Doctors Collective was a determining factor but the role played by ARTAC, offering a total support to the mobilization and the creation of a scientific experts group on the dangers of incineration (GESDI) was also an important aspect of this success. (See the document titled: [Expertise nationale concernant les alternatives à l'incinération et aux décharges : aspects environnementaux, sanitaires et socio-économiques](#) published by the GESDI).

Increased risk of cancer for neighbouring residents

This victory for public health is a sign of hope for those who are mobilizing against the construction of a new incinerator in other departments. More broadly, it raises the question of the sustainability of the 130 [garbage incinerators](#) currently operating in France, given the increased cancer risk to surrounding populations.

In March 2008, a report by the "[Institut National de Veille Sanitaire](#)" (InVS) highlighted a considerable increase in the risk of developing certain types cancer (lymphoma, myeloma, soft tissue sarcomas, cancers of the breast and liver) among those who lived near an incinerator in years 70 and 80. Dioxins are often pinpointed as the culprits, but the report of InVS said that the epidemiological study cannot blame a particular pollutant.

Excès de risque de cancers

Type de cancer	Excès de risque de cancers Résultats préliminaires novembre 2006	Excès de risque de cancers Résultats définitifs mars 2008
Myélomes multiples chez l'homme	/	- 23 %
Myélomes multiples (2 sexes)	/	- 16 %
Sarcomes des tissus mous (2 sexes)	+ 12,9 %	- 22 %
Lymphomes malins non Hodgkiniens chez la femme	/	- 18 %
Lymphomes malins non Hodgkiniens (2 sexes)	+ 8,4 %	- 12 %
Cancer du foie (2 sexes)	+ 9,7 %	- 16 %
Cancer du sein chez la femme	+ 6,9 %	+ 9 %
Tous cancers chez la femme	+ 4 %	+ 6 %

Résultats présentés dans le rapport préliminaire de l'InVS en 2006, puis revus à la hausse dans le rapport final de 2008.

Setting the standards for incinerators: Claimed improvements are truly misleading

The argument that the new generations of incinerators have higher filtering capabilities against dioxins is often advanced to reassure the local population of these facilities. But this setting the standards do not guarantee the reduction of risk, the chemical processes used to filter dioxins proved ineffective in many other CMR (carcinogenic, mutagenic and / or reprotoxic) from the burning of household waste. Moreover, the effectiveness of filters is relative, given the laxity that surrounds their maintenance, weakness and lack of independence of checks and the numerous exceptions. These allow operators of incinerators to operate without a filter for 60 hours per year, discharges may then be up to 12 500 times the norm, as was the case on Gilly Isere in years 80 and 90.

In addition, the standards do not provide for the control of air emissions for a few pollutants such as dioxins, furans, nitrogen oxides, sulfur dioxide and heavy metals themselves, setting emission limit values in the exhaust gas and discharges of sewage incinerators. The vast majority of hundreds, even thousands of molecules emitted by incinerators is not subject to these standards. This is the case for example for bromine or polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs).

Other studies also relativize the argument of "dioxin", including the [impregnation study](#) performed by the InVS in 2006. It has demonstrated little difference between the contamination of coastal populations of an incinerator and that of the entire population. The exhibition area does not seem to be a factor, compared to individual factors (age, weight, sex, occupation, lifestyle, etc.). The study concludes that "it has not been demonstrated that residing around a UIOM [plant incineration of municipal waste] increased the average concentration of dioxins." And for good reason: Dioxins are not biodegradable, they store in fats, and contaminate the entire food chain. The main route of exposure is known consumption of animal products (eggs, dairy products, meat, seafood).

The pollution linked to incineration is **not only local near the incinerator**, but also to distance or borders. Its existence is transgressing the precautionary principle required with respect to any chemical which, because of its persistent, bioaccumulative and toxic (PBT) or very persistent and very bioaccumulative (vPvB) as defined internationally, there is a danger alleged serious and/or irreversible damage to human health and the environment. It is then possible to await the formal proof of an epidemiological link to prevent and avoid environmental damage or serious health or irreversible.

The whole of the French population are fairly "equitably" contaminated by dioxins, other risk factors must be sought to explain why the incidence of certain types of cancer is higher among people living near incinerators.

Incineration, the worst solution

It is the combustion that incineration is more at risk than all other methods of waste disposal. As Lavoisier was saying: "Nothing is lost, nothing is created, everything is transformed." By burning simultaneously organic waste, plastics and other compounds containing chlorine, bromine, etc., It creates volatile molecules some of which are particularly dangerous for the environment and health.

Today, medical practitioners no longer want to be at the far end of the chain and treat these diseases which should easily be preventable, as was the case with asbestos. Better than cure, they want to prevent, in accordance with the commitment enshrined in the Hippocratic oath and the code of medical ethics.

Throughout France, several thousand doctors and health professionals are mobilizing for a concrete strategy of prevention and environmental precaution. The establishment on January 27, 2008 of the National Medical Coordination Health Environment, which brings together many regional associations of health professionals - whose collective Clermont-Ferrand - mobilized for environmental health, is one example.

Solutions do exist. They are presented in the "[national expertise on alternatives to incineration and landfills: environmental, health and socio-economic](#) ."

There is an urgent need to use them systematically.

Help us continue our work on links between cancer and environment, support the ARTAC returning to the form available on [this page](#).

Translated from the [original French document](#).