

## Letter to the Editor

# Data use in a toxicokinetic model to reconstruct methylmercury intake

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In the article by Gosselin et al. (2006) entitled “Reconstruction of methylmercury intakes in indigenous populations from biomarker data”, the authors use the toxicokinetic model of Carrier et al. (2001) to back-calculate the MeHg intakes from concentrations in hair strands collected from “aboriginals” of the Amazon region in Brazil. The Amazon data, which comes from our research group, was sent to Dr. Carrier for purposes of collaboration, but was then used without our consent or knowledge for the above publication. Unfortunately, there are several important errors. The first is that the data (hair strands, which we sampled and analyzed for mercury content) are not derived from an Amazonian ‘aboriginal’ population, but rather a riparian population traditionally called *ribeirinha* or *cabocla*. These traditional populations in the Brazilian Amazon originated from the miscegenation of old indigenous populations with European colonizers and, to a less extent, with African slaves during XVIII and XIX centuries (Lima, 1992; Murrieta, 2001). The village of Brasilia Legal, where the hair samples were taken, was founded in the middle of the XIX century. Pictures of the village and villagers can be found on the FACOME website at: [http://www.facome.uqam.ca/facome/home/info/projetos/tapajos\\_intro\\_e.html](http://www.facome.uqam.ca/facome/home/info/projetos/tapajos_intro_e.html).

The data used for modeling in the above-mentioned article consisted of Hg values from 108 hair strands that were collected and analyzed, as part of the CARUSO Project, funded by the Canadian International Development Centre, by Carlos José Sousa Passos, a doctoral student at the University of Quebec at Montreal, and not, as indicated by the authors, from data published in Lebel et al., 1996, 1998 and Dolbec et al., 2001. Modeling results would have been different if they had indeed used the latter data, which were taken from two villages with different patterns of fish consumption. For models to advance understanding and be

useful for establishing recommendations, data need to be accurately portrayed. To achieve this, collaboration with those who collected the data, who have knowledge of the characteristics of the population who provided the samples, should be a prerequisite.

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