

Atlas Mortality study reveals a striking cluster in south western region of Spain

The Environmental Safety Group focuses this week on the work done by **Professor Joan Benach, of University Pompeu, Barcelona**, on the geography of highest mortality areas in Spain. We look at the conclusions and summary of his last report and his recent involvement in support of the delegation from Gibraltar on its visit to Brussels. *(Report available on www.occenvmed.com)*

The ESG was shocked but not surprised when it first became aware of the findings of this study:

- that Huelva, Cadiz and Seville contain striking geographical clustering, and that
- the region comprising **8%** of the Spanish population, accounts for about **one third (2,884)** of the total excess mortality

The implications of this study suggest the need for in-depth multidisciplinary investigations of various potentially damaging environmental, occupational, and social risk factors on mortality; furthermore, the results raise important implications for health policy, suggesting that high risk areas should be the highest priority of public health policies in Spain.

In the report's discussion, "....the clustering of the worst mortality areas in the south-western region of Spain especially in the provinces of Huelva, Seville and Cadiz, for both men and women, is consistent and astonishing. The data reveal that these "dangerous" areas have a statistically significant increased risk of death that imposes a large public health burden which urgently demands attention and action."

The ESG believe these findings underline the **urgent need** for an epidemiological study to be started NOW. It is no secret that citizens from both sides of the border have been asking for this very study for many years. Yet, persistently, it remains on the back burner on politician's tables on both sides of the border. This is an appalling disservice to the people they are employed to serve.

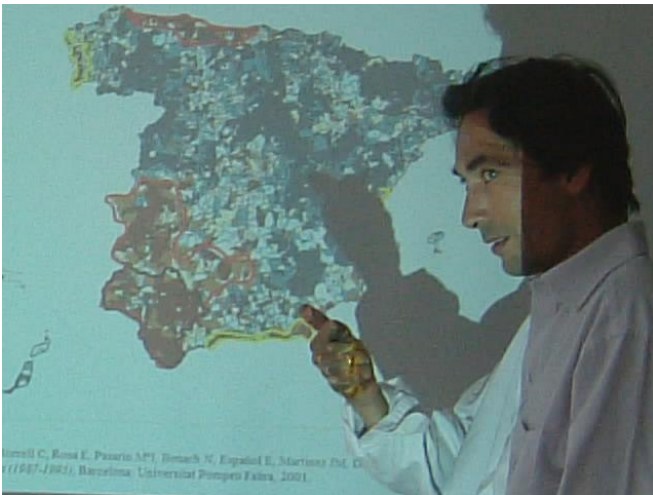
The ESG was very thankful to the Professor to have joined the team in its recent lobbying trip to Brussels to present the serious findings of his study highlighting the concerns that environmental factors are probably contributing towards the high level of cancers and other serious illnesses in the Bay of Gibraltar. Until the people have the information they deserve regarding the true impacts from these heavy industrial activities on their health, any reassurances to the contrary will be ill-based and without any foundation.

This mortality study has been peer reviewed at international level and has been conducted applying the strictest statistical methodology.

***Footnote:-** The study includes 2218 small areas around the Iberian peninsula but excludes Gibraltar at present time. Professor Benach is very interested in visiting Gibraltar and possibly including the area in the overall study to complete the picture. The ESG is currently making arrangements for the Professor to come to Gibraltar and will advise dates when confirmed.*



*delegation comprising of:
David Dumas QC, Daniel Hernandez- EC lawyer, Janet Howitt – ESG,
Denny Larson Global Leader Bucket Brigade and Professor Benach of
University Barcelona - Brussels July 2005*



*Senior EC lawyer observing clusters as portrayed
on a map by Professor Benach. Brussels July '05*

By the Environmental Safety Group