

**International Agency for Research on Cancer**

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**World Health  
Organization**

***IARC Monographs on the Identification of  
Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans***

**Report of the Advisory  
Group to Recommend  
Priorities for the  
*IARC Monographs* during  
2025–2029**

Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities  
for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029

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This publication contains the report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029, which alone is responsible for the views expressed.

*IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans*

**Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029**

Lyon, France: 19–22 March 2024

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## Introduction

An IARC Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029 met in Lyon, France, on 19–22 March 2024. IARC periodically convenes such Advisory Groups to ensure that the *Monographs* evaluations reflect the current state of scientific evidence relevant to carcinogenicity.

Before the meeting, IARC solicited nominations of agents via the website of the *IARC Monographs* programme and announcements in the triannual *IARC Monographs* newsletter, and through direct contact with the IARC Governing Council and members of the IARC Scientific Council, WHO headquarters and regional offices, and previous participants in the *Monographs* programme. Nominations were also developed by the Advisory Group and by IARC personnel, including consideration of the recommended priorities remaining from a similar Advisory Group meeting convened in 2019 (IARC, 2019a).

The list of Advisory Group members and all other meeting participants is provided in Annex 1 (see [https://monographs.iarc.who.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Short\\_List\\_of\\_Participants\\_AGP2024.pdf](https://monographs.iarc.who.int/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/Short_List_of_Participants_AGP2024.pdf)); the preliminary agenda is provided in Annex 2. Dr Amy Berrington de González (United Kingdom) served as Meeting Chair, and Dr Scott Masten (United States of America) served as Meeting Vice Chair. The Subgroup Chairs were Parveen Bhatti (Canada), Renee Turzanski Fortner (Norway), Susan Peters (Kingdom of the Netherlands), Tiina Santonen (Finland), and Marianna G Yakubovskaya (Russian Federation).

### Meeting preparation and conduct

Relevant background information was distributed before the meeting and through presentations during the meeting. This included introductory material about the *IARC Monographs* evaluation approach, which was refined in the 2019 Preamble to the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 2019b).

The Advisory Group considered more than 210 unique candidate agents nominated for consideration. Draft summaries of the evidence supporting each nomination were prepared before the meeting, based on literature search terms developed to identify studies of human exposure (including any evidence of exposure in low- and middle-income countries, LMICs), cancer epidemiology, cancer bioassays in experimental animals, and carcinogen mechanisms (see Annex 3). This evidence was summarized in the drafts, in line with the evaluation approach described in the Preamble to the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 2019b).

A complementary approach assessed nominations using a chemoinformatics, text mining, and chemical similarity analysis workflow (Guha et al., 2016; Barupal et al., 2021) to help reveal the extent of evidence across data streams, to support decisions on individual agents and groups of chemically related nominations, particularly for the mechanistic evidence stream. In brief, the workflow entailed linking agents to identifiers, performing automated literature searches and queries of relevant online databases supplemented by custom Google searches, and generating hierarchical clustering heat maps. The literature search terms and the heat maps used for this complementary approach are provided in Annex 4.

Information on whether the agent had a high production volume was obtained from the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) and US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA). The latest years of availability for these data were 2007 for OECD and 2023 for the US EPA.

At the meeting, the Advisory Group reviewed the writing assignments in subgroups organized by evidence stream (i.e. exposure characterization, cancer in humans, cancer in experimental animals, and mechanisms of carcinogenesis) and by type of agent (e.g. biological agents, complex exposures, occupations, pharmaceuticals, metals, particles and fibres, chemicals), to inform the development of recommendations on priorities. The subgroup sessions developed draft indications, for further discussion and adoption in plenary sessions, of which nominations are of highest priority and readiness for future review, on the basis of (i) evidence of human exposure and (ii) evidence or suspicion of carcinogenicity that could result in a new or revised classification. Agents not meeting these criteria were not recommended for evaluation.

### Determining priority

As described in the Preamble to the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 2019b), priority was assigned for:

- (a) A new evaluation of an agent not previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.
- (b) An agent reviewed previously by the *Monographs* with new evidence of cancer in humans or in experimental animals or of carcinogen mechanisms, to warrant re-evaluation of the classification.
- (c) An agent reviewed previously by the *Monographs* and established to be carcinogenic to humans with new evidence of cancer in humans that indicates a possible causal association with new tumour sites. In the interests of efficiency, the review included only human cancer evidence and, if relevant, information on absorption, distribution, metabolism and excretion (ADME) for these new tumour sites.

Priority was assigned on the basis of (i) evidence of human exposure and (ii) the extent and nature of the available evidence for evaluating carcinogenicity (i.e. the availability of relevant evidence on cancer in humans, cancer in experimental animals, and mechanisms of carcinogenesis to support a new or updated evaluation according to the Preamble to the *IARC Monographs*). Any of the three evidence streams could alone support prioritization of agents with no previous evaluation. For previously evaluated agents, the Advisory Group considered the basis of the previous classification as well as the potential impact of the newly available evidence during integration across streams (see Table 4 in the Preamble to the *IARC Monographs*; IARC, 2019b). Agents previously classified as *Group 1 – Carcinogenic to Humans* considered only human cancer evidence for tumour types currently with less than *sufficient* evidence. Agents without evidence of human exposure or evidence for evaluating carcinogenicity were not recommended for further consideration. Agents that were clearly not exogenous were also given no priority for evaluation.

### Advice on topics related to prioritization

The IARC/WHO Secretariat invited the Advisory Group to provide advice on several questions related to prioritization of agents for evaluation. The first question was whether agents demonstrating emerging evidence of carcinogenicity should be added to the priorities list. The second question was whether the *IARC Monographs* programme should systematically re-appraise all the Group 1 agents to identify whether there are new cancer sites in humans with *sufficient* or *limited* evidence. The third question related to interpretation of a statement in the Preamble about evidence arising from a single human cancer study.

1. The Advisory Group endorsed the suggestion that agents not currently included on the prioritization list should be added if persuasive evidence emerges before the next Advisory Group meeting regarding evidence for cancer in humans, cancer in experimental animals, or mechanistic evidence.

2. The Advisory Group supported the systematic re-evaluation of the Group 1 agents to identify whether new cancer sites have *sufficient* or *limited* evidence in humans. This is based on the observation that all 10 Group 1 agents that were nominated for review by the 2024 Advisory Group on Priorities were deemed to have such evidence warranting a further *Monographs* review. The Advisory Group suggested that this be conducted (pending available funding) as a parallel process to the existing *Monographs* programme, so that it would not impact the progress of evaluation of new agents or of previously evaluated agents classified in Groups 2A, 2B, or 3.

3. The Preamble notes that "There is no formulaic answer to the question of how many studies of cancer in humans are needed from which to draw inferences about causality, although more than a single study in a single population will almost always be needed." Does the Advisory Group have advice about under what circumstances a study in a single population could be used for causal inference?

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The Advisory Group noted examples where a single study could potentially be used for causal inference, including exposures for which there is a large study pooling different populations; exposures that occur only in a restricted geographic location (e.g., erionite or vermiculite, fibres that have shown very high risks for a signature tumour—mesothelioma); exposures for which only single informative highly exposed population is available (e.g., 1,2-dichloropropane in Japanese printing workers); tumour signature data (e.g., for aristolochic acid); or a well-conducted study of cancer as a late effect following a drug trial. Intervention trials might also qualify. The key issue a Working Group must consider in such a circumstance is whether chance, bias, and confounding can be ruled out when there is only a single study. The Advisory Group considered that the number of studies required might differ for an interpretation of *limited* vs. *sufficient* evidence.

### **Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029**

The types of recommendation made by the Advisory Group encompassed individual agents as well as groups of related agents. In this regard, the Advisory Group recommended to group some individual nominations, to expand the proposed nomination to encompass related agents meriting evaluation in some cases, and, in other instances, to narrow a group of nominated agents. It was further noted that consideration of information from new approach methods in toxicology, such as ToxCast, Tox21, and quantitative structure–activity relationships as well as read-across from structurally similar compounds, could be particularly informative in some cases.

Tabular summaries of the agents recommended for evaluation with *high* and *medium* priority are provided in Tables 1 and 2, respectively. Agents not recommended for evaluation are summarized in Table 3. Elaborations of these recommendations are provided in the sections that follow.

The Advisory Group recognized that agents related to the identified priorities may also warrant evaluation. Furthermore, in line with advice given in the section above, additional agents may merit consideration if new relevant evidence indicating an emerging carcinogenic hazard (e.g. from cancer epidemiology studies, cancer bioassays, and/or studies on key characteristics of carcinogens) becomes available in the next 5 years.

IARC will consider the recommendations of the Advisory Group when selecting agents for future *Monographs* evaluations according to the Preamble to the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 2019b). The selection will be made consistent with coordination and communication mechanisms agreed between IARC and WHO headquarters and set out in the interim standard operating procedure adopted by the IARC Governing Council (see [https://events.iarc.who.int/event/46/attachments/110/483/GC60\\_13\\_CoordinationWHO.pdf](https://events.iarc.who.int/event/46/attachments/110/483/GC60_13_CoordinationWHO.pdf)).

**Table 1. Agents recommended for evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* with *high* priority**

Agent name	Rationale
<b><u>Agents not previously evaluated by the <i>IARC Monographs</i></u></b>	
Sleep disruption; Obesity <sup>§</sup> ; Disinfection byproducts in water, including haloacetic acids; Metalworking fluids; Platinum-based chemotherapies as mechanistic class <sup>¶</sup> ; Hair straightening products; Dibutyl phthalate; Artificial light at night <sup>*</sup> ; Nitrogen dioxide <sup>*</sup> ; GLP-1 analogues <sup>*</sup> ; Sugar-sweetened beverage consumption <sup>*</sup> ; Fonofos <sup>*</sup>	Relevant human cancer, animal cancer, and mechanistic evidence
<i>Fusobacterium nucleatum</i> ; Human cytomegalovirus; Sedentary behaviour; Anthracyclines as mechanistic class <sup>¶</sup> ; Epirubicin; BRAF inhibitors—Dabrafenib, Encorafenib, Vemurafenib; Tetracycline; Tofacitinib and other Janus kinase inhibitors; Ultra-processed food consumption; Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid; Cannabis smoking <sup>*</sup> ; Ultrafine particles <sup>*</sup> ; Assisted reproductive techniques <sup>*</sup> ; Chlorpyrifos <sup>*</sup>	Relevant human cancer and mechanistic evidence
Electronic nicotine delivery systems; Ozone; Carbadox; Estragole; Alachlor; Cyfluthrin; Cypermethrin; Mancozeb; Neonicotinoid insecticides; Tebuconazole; Vinclozolin; Bisphenol A; Bisphenol S; Bisphenol F; Pentabromodiphenyl ethers; Hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid; Diisononyl phthalate; Methanol; 2,3-Butanedione; Carbon disulfide; Glycidamide; Triclosan	Relevant animal cancer and mechanistic evidence
<i>Salmonella typhi</i> ; Taconite; Terbufos <sup>*</sup>	Relevant human cancer evidence
Metyltetraprole; Proquinazid; Chlorinated paraffins; Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate; Butyraldehyde	Relevant animal cancer evidence
Methamphetamine; Congo red; 2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone; Cumyl hydroperoxide; Parabens; Electronic-waste work <sup>*</sup> ; Polyhexamethyleneguanidine <sup>*</sup>	Relevant mechanistic evidence
<b><u>Agents previously evaluated by <i>IARC Monographs</i><sup>†</sup></u></b>	
Coal dust; Textured implants (breast and buttock); Paracetamol/ acetaminophen; Pyrethrins and pyrethroids; Permethrin; Carbaryl; Ethylenedithiocarbamates; Hair colouring products (personal use of)	New human cancer, animal cancer, and mechanistic evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification

**Table 1. Agents recommended for evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* with *high* priority**

Agent name	Rationale
Non-ionising radiation (radiofrequency)*	New human cancer and animal cancer evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
Human papillomavirus $\beta$ ; <i>Opisthorchis felineus</i> ; Textile manufacturing industry work; Indoor combustion of biomass; Inorganic lead compounds; Daunorubicin; Doxorubicin; Methotrexate; Atrazine; Acetaldehyde; Acrylamide; Merkel cell polyomavirus*; Progesterone-only contraceptives*; Clomiphene citrate*; Chlordecone*	New human cancer and mechanistic evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
Zearalenone; Multiwalled carbon nanotubes; 5-Nitro- <i>o</i> -toluidine; <i>p</i> -Phenylenediamine; 4-Nitrotoluene; Butyl benzyl phthalate	New animal cancer and mechanistic evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
Hepatitis D virus; Metallic nickel; Very hot beverages and food <sup>‡</sup> ; Carbon tetrachloride*; Tetrachloroethylene*	New human cancer evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
Piperonyl butoxide	New animal cancer evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
<i>Schistosoma japonicum</i> ; <i>S. mansoni</i> ; Patulin; Safrole; Anaesthetics, volatile-isoflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane; Malathion; 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine; 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine; Isoprene; Bromate compounds; Fluoranthene*	New mechanistic evidence to warrant re-evaluation of the classification
<i>Helicobacter pylori</i> *; Aflatoxins*; Tobacco smoking and second-hand smoke*; Outdoor air pollution*; Silica dust*; Asbestos*; Hormone replacement therapy*; Radon and its decay products*; Ethylene oxide*; Formaldehyde*	Group 1 carcinogen with evidence for new cancer sites (see Section 3 of Preamble to the <i>IARC Monographs</i> ; IARC, 2019b)

Evidence of human exposure was identified for all agents. Agents are ordered by readiness for evaluation and then by type (infectious, biotoxins, complex exposures, occupations, particles, fibres, metals, pharmaceuticals, physical agents, nutritional agents, pesticides, dye-related, persistent organic pollutants, solvents, other chemicals)

<sup>†</sup>See <https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications/> for current list of classifications

\*Advised to conduct in latter half of 5-year period

<sup>§</sup>A minority of the Advisory Group considered that obesity is not an exogenous agent and therefore should not be evaluated

<sup>¶</sup>Advised to evaluate each pharmaceutical individually in the same volume

<sup>‡</sup>Very hot food has not been previously evaluated

**Table 2. Agents recommended for evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* with medium priority**

Agent name	Previous evaluation status
<i>Toxoplasma gondii</i> ; Black cohosh extracts; $\alpha$ -Pinene; Outdoor combustion of biomass; Anatase-type nano-TiO <sub>2</sub> ; Anti-thymocyte globulin; Neonatal phototherapy; Bifenthrin; Biphenyl; Pendimethalin; Tattoos and permanent make up; Sulfolane	Agents not previously evaluated by the <i>IARC Monographs</i>
Fumonisin B1; Pyrrolizidine alkaloids; Selenium and selenium compounds; Xylenes; Ingested nitrate	Agents previously evaluated by the <i>IARC Monographs</i> <sup>†</sup>
Evidence of human exposure was identified for all agents. Agents are ordered by type (infectious, biotoxins, complex exposures, particles, metals, physical agents, pharmaceuticals, pesticides, dye-related, persistent organic pollutants, solvents, other chemicals)	
<sup>†</sup> See <a href="https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications/">https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications/</a> for current list of classifications	

**Table 3. Nominated agents not recommended for evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* during 2025-2029**

Agent name	Rationale
Chronic circadian dysfunction; Insomnia; Alefacept; Diabetes; Reduction of sex hormones with human aging; Violation of tissue renewal/regeneration with human aging	No evidence of exposure, or not an exogenous exposure
Dysbiotic microbiota; Poor oral hygiene; Nitrate-reducing bacteria in tobacco; Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2; Gene or cell therapy or vectors; Long working hours; Social isolation and loneliness; Cleaning products; Laboratory work and occupation as a chemist; Occupation as a pesticide applicator; Semiconductor industry work; Engineered stone fabrication; Acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene particles emitted by 3D printers; Micro- and nano-plastics; Aluminium; Phosphorescent paints; Rare earth elements; Gadolinium-based contrast agents; Reversible acetylcholinesterase inhibitors; Glucocorticoids; Intense pulsed light; Dietary salt intake; Indole-3-carbinol; Isoflavones; Sucralose; Artificially sweetened beverage consumption; 2,4-Dichlorophenol; Ametryn; Boscalid; Phosmet; <i>S</i> -Ethyl- <i>N,N</i> -dipropylthiocarbamate; Hexythiazox; Cinidon ethyl; Furmecyclox; <i>o</i> -Benzyl- <i>p</i> -chlorophenol; Ethyl anthranilate; Menthyl anthranilate; Methyl anthranilate; Red dye no. 3 (Erythrosine); Allyl alcohol; <i>p</i> -Cresol; 1,2-Cyclohexanedicarboxylic acid, diisononyl ester; 2,4-Dimethylphenol; 2,4,6-Tribromophenol; 2-Hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone; Atratic acid; Glutathione; Palmitic acid; Styrene-acrylonitrile (SAN) trimer	Existing evidence does not appear to support a first-time classification
Malaria; Cyclopeptide cyanotoxins; Night shift work; Carbon black, bulk and nanoscale; Dental amalgam; Androstenedione; Oxymetholone; Extremely low-frequency magnetic fields; 1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane; Glyphosate; <i>p</i> -Dichlorobenzene; 1,1-Dimethylhydrazine; 2,4-Diaminotoluene; <i>o</i> -Aminoazotoluene; <i>p</i> -Cresidine; Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid; Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate; Tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate; Cumene; Dichloromethane; 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene; 1,4-Dioxane; Catechol; Furan; Nitritotriacetic acid; Thioacetamide	Existing evidence does not appear to support a change in classification <sup>†</sup>
Agents are ordered by type (infectious, biotoxins, complex exposures, occupations, particles, metals, pharmaceuticals, physical agents, pesticides, dye-related, persistent organic pollutants, solvents, other chemicals)	
<sup>†</sup> See <a href="https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications/">https://monographs.iarc.who.int/list-of-classifications/</a> for current list of classifications	



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## Priorities for *IARC Monographs* during 2025 – 2029

### 001 Dysbiotic microbiota

#### Current IARC/WHO classification

Dysbiotic microbiota has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Dysbiotic microbiota was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

#### Exposure characterization

The human body can be colonized by many microorganisms, which are collectively designated the microbiota. These microorganisms include bacteria, archaea, fungi, and viruses. A dysbiotic microbiota is characterized by its capacity to produce a disruption in the microbiota of the gut or other organs or tissues. The prevalence of a dysbiotic microbiota has not been well characterized, since it varies according to the type of host organism in which it is studied. Exposures such as diet, drugs (e.g. antibiotics), food additives, or hygiene may affect the profile of an organism's microbiota; such a modification can have pathogenic implications.

#### Cancer in humans

The microbiota of the host may increase, decrease, or have no effect on cancer susceptibility. Assigning causal roles in cancer to specific microbes and microbiota profiles, unravelling the interactions between host, microbiota, and environmental factors that are associated with carcinogenesis, and exploiting such knowledge for cancer diagnosis and treatment are areas of intensive research (Hrncir, 2022). However, in reviews of the role of dysbiosis in the development of cancer, numerous microorganisms in the microbiota are usually considered; this highlights the difficulty in ascribing causality to one particular microorganism. An example is a recent review conducted by Cheng et al. (2020), in which the following were examined for their relation to colorectal cancer: *Streptococcus bovis*, enterotoxigenic *Bacteroides fragilis*, *Fusobacterium nucleatum*, *Enterococcus faecalis*, *Escherichia coli*, and *Peptostreptococcus anaerobius* (Cheng et al., 2020). Concerning prostate cancer, case–control studies including a small number of cases ( $n \leq 20$ ) indicated possible associations with *Bacteroides massiliensis*, *Akkermansia muciniphila*, and species of *Ruminococcaceae* and *Streptococcus* (Fujita et al., 2023). A recent review of studies examined the potential role of dysbiosis in the development of hepatocellular carcinoma (HCC); however, attribution of risk may be difficult, given the presence of many microorganisms (Spanu et al., 2022). Note that *Fusobacterium nucleatum* is reviewed next in the present report (agent 002).

#### Cancer in experimental animals

Zackular et al. (2013) demonstrated that when gut microbiota from mice with tumours were transplanted into C57BL/6 mice in a germ-free facility, the rate of tumorigenesis in the colon increased significantly. It was shown that manipulation of the intestinal microbiota with antibiotic treatment led to a decrease in the number and size of tumours in colorectal cancer-susceptible mice when antibiotics were administered (Zackular et al., 2013; Schulz et al., 2014).

#### Mechanistic evidence

Several studies demonstrated that dysbiotic bacteria are involved in mechanisms leading to carcinogenesis. The dysbiotic microbiota releases specific toxins that could directly induce DNA damage

and hinder DNA repair, and modulate tumorigenesis (Nesić et al., 2004; Meira et al., 2008; Wu et al., 2009; Cuevas-Ramos et al., 2010; Arthur et al., 2012). An increase in mutation frequency was shown to activate oncogenes or suppress tumour suppressor genes (Jackson and Loeb, 2001), which could accelerate genomic instability and result in colon cancer (Kawanishi et al., 2006; Mantovani and Pierotti, 2008; Elinav et al., 2013; Grivennikov, 2013; Kostic et al., 2013; Schwabe and Jobin, 2013; Watson et al., 2013; Esteban-Jurado et al., 2014). It has been shown in several studies that dysbiotic microbiota could induce DNA damage, either directly or through increased oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, or an activated signalling pathway (Secher et al., 2010; Olszak et al., 2012; Rubinstein et al., 2013; Chen et al., 2014a; Ray and Kidane, 2016; Sacdalan and Lucero, 2021; Gupta et al., 2022a).

A decrease in lactic acid-producing bacteria and an increase in potentially pathogenic bacteria may increase the risk of chronic inflammation and colitis-associated development of colorectal cancer (Ooi et al., 2013; Assa et al., 2014, 2015).

Biswas et al. (2012) considered that without nucleotide binding oligomerization domain containing 2 (NOD2) protein, a key player in the immune response, the sensing and recognition of bacterial muramyl dipeptide (MDP) are impaired and that these bacteria cannot then be neutralized, so they continue to reproduce in the gut, causing dysbiosis. This dysbiosis alters the host–microbial interactions in the ileal mucosa, leading to an increased inflammatory response and, potentially, cancer development.

Vitamin D and vitamin D receptor play a role in the composition of the gut microbiota and cancer development (Russell et al., 2011; Assa et al., 2014, 2015; Jin et al., 2015). Li et al. (2015a) found that a diet high in fat and sugar resulted in dysbiosis in mice with altered host barrier function.

Several studies have also demonstrated the relation between NOD2 and commensal bacteria in rodents (Petnicki-Ocwieja et al., 2009; Shaw et al., 2011; Couturier-Maillard et al., 2013; Li et al., 2015a). In addition, a single nucleotide polymorphism (SNP) in the ATG16L1 gene was found to be involved in inflammatory responses in both mice and humans. Cadwell et al. (2008) found, in humans and in mice that were homozygous for the Crohn disease risk allele, that there were no morphological abnormalities in the ileum, but abnormalities in Paneth cell granule secretion were displayed. Such mutations caused a defect in an interleukin (IL), IL-10 mediated anti-inflammatory signalling cascade in both IL-10R<sup>−/−</sup> mice and humans, which resulted in severe intestinal inflammation and increased secretion of proinflammatory cytokines, most notably of tumour necrosis factor alpha (TNFα), from peripheral blood mononuclear cells (PBMCs) (Glocker et al., 2009; Kabi et al., 2012; Gassas et al., 2015).

El Saie et al. (2022) investigated the dysbiotic microbiome metabolites that may lead to bronchopulmonary dysplasia (BPD). Hyperoxia and lipopolysaccharide (LPS) interaction altered the lung microbiome and metabolome, mediating the BPD lung injury sequence. Zackular et al. (2013) demonstrated that gut microbiota extracted from mice with tumours and transplanted into C57BL/6 mice, in a germ-free facility, induced tumorigenesis in the colons of the mice receiving the transplanted microbiota by inducing cell proliferation.

## Summary

In humans, the microbiota interacts with the host immune system in multiple ways to influence the development of diseases, including cancer. For instance, the gut microbiota is involved in the initiation, progression, and chemoresistance of several cancers, including colorectal cancer. There is also a possible role of microbiota in the promotion of HCC, mediating increased proliferation. From the perspective of cancer in humans and experimental animals, the agent is too poorly defined to support an evaluation of its carcinogenicity. There is only sparse evidence that a dysbiotic microbiota induces tumorigenesis in experimental animals.

There is some mechanistic evidence that the dysbiotic microbiota exhibits key characteristics (KCs) of carcinogens, including genotoxicity, induction of oxidative stress, and alteration of cell proliferation, along

with evidence of altered immune and inflammatory responses in experimental systems. Although a large body of mechanistic evidence implies that a dysbiotic microbiota is carcinogenic, the definition of the exposure is unclear, and it is unlikely that an evaluation would find epidemiological evidence supporting causality. For an effective evaluation, it would probably be necessary to define exactly which microorganisms should be evaluated. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of dysbiotic microbiota is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **002 *Fusobacterium nucleatum***

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

*Fusobacterium nucleatum* has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

*F. nucleatum* is a Gram-negative anaerobic commensal bacterium (Brennan and Garrett, 2019). It is found ubiquitously in the oral cavity but is absent or infrequently detected elsewhere in the body under normal conditions (Han, 2015).

### **Cancer in humans**

A large number of relatively recent studies have been conducted to examine the prevalence of *F. nucleatum* in tumour specimens or in the oral cavities of people with cancer, compared with controls. These studies have demonstrated associations with cancer at several organ sites, in particular, the colorectum, oral cavity, and breast. However, one recent nested case–control study (Debertin et al., 2023) found mixed evidence of an association between increased risk of colorectal cancer and an increased serum antibody immunoglobulin G (IgG) response. Another recent nested case–control study (Lo et al., 2021a) did not find an association between *F. nucleatum* and colorectal cancer. It currently remains unclear, however, whether serum antibody IgG response is a valid measure of exposure.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

At least four studies showed that a higher abundance of *F. nucleatum* accelerates tumour growth and metastasis in colon and breast cancer (Kostic et al., 2013; Rubinstein et al., 2013; Bullman et al., 2017; Parhi et al., 2020). In a study by Queen et al. (2021), designed to establish stably colonized mouse models, colonization with *F. nucleatum* induced chronic inflammation (KC6) but did not promote tumorigenesis in germ-free (GF) Apc<sup>Min/+</sup> mice (Queen et al., 2021).

The mechanisms that have been uncovered using these models include: (i) the promotion of proliferation (which supports KC10); (ii) alteration of the tumour microenvironment to become pro-tumorigenic; (iii) suppression of the immune system in the tumour microenvironment (which supports KC7); and (iv) the induction of inflammation (which supports KC6). Several more papers report the compromise of different barriers by *F. nucleatum*, allowing the bacteria to migrate and establish colonies within tumour sites (Little et al., 2023). However, an in-depth analysis of these studies is required, since the body of evidence includes several different types of knockout mice and diverse experimental designs.

Several published reports support these findings, pointing mostly towards KC6, KC7, and KC10. The presence of intratumour *F. nucleatum* promoted cancer progression through the C-X-C motif chemokine ligand 1 (CXCL1)–C-X-C motif chemokine receptor 2 (CXCR2) axis in a pancreatic cancer model (Hayashi

et al., 2023). It was shown that intratumour *F. nucleatum* suppressed tumour-infiltrating CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells by recruiting myeloid-derived suppressor cells (MDSCs), resulting in tumour progression in a pancreatic cancer model in mice – importantly, tumour growth in this model was suppressed by MDSC depletion and the use of cytokine inhibitors (Hayashi et al., 2023). It was also shown that the elimination of *F. nucleatum* using antibiotics in nanogels inhibited tumour growth, resulting in increased animal survival (Xie et al., 2024a). *F. nucleatum* subspecies *polymorphum*, isolated from saliva samples collected from patients with oral carcinoma, was shown to promote oral squamous cell carcinoma (SCC) by activating Yes-activating protein (YAP) in a mouse tongue cancer model (Yamamoto et al., 2023). YAP is a transcriptional coregulator that promotes gene transcription associated with cellular proliferation and apoptosis suppression. Concerning a pro-tumorigenic environment, infection with *F. nucleatum* was shown to alter the microbiota of the colonic mucosa by enriching for pathogens related to the development of colorectal carcinoma (Wu et al., 2022a). Several recent reviews were available: Chiang et al. (2023a), Little et al. (2023), and Pandey et al. (2023). Galeano Niño et al. (2022) reported that spatial and cellular heterogeneity in cancer cells is influenced by the microbiota and its effect on the surrounding environment.

### Summary

*Fusobacterium nucleatum* is a commonly occurring bacterium, primarily found in the oral cavity and the gut. It is strongly linked to the occurrence of periodontal disease, a condition that is more common in people with poor oral hygiene practices. The literature on *F. nucleatum* and cancer is extensive (more than 800 papers) and the epidemiological evidence from case–control studies is consistent with the organism being a possible carcinogen. However, one prospective study did not reveal any association, but it is not clear to what extent serum antibody IgG response to the presence of *F. nucleatum* is a valid measure of exposure. No studies of complete carcinogenesis were available in experimental animals. The mechanistic evidence appears to be convincing, since results observed in different systems point towards consistent mechanisms, with coherent findings, while the examined studies cover a broad and varied range of relevant end-points in mammalian species. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *Fusobacterium nucleatum* to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 003 Poor oral hygiene

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Poor oral hygiene has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Poor oral hygiene was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence of human cancer obtained from case–control studies.

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a):

Oral hygiene concerns keeping one's oral cavity clean, usually by regular brushing of teeth and cleaning between teeth. The lack of oral hygiene promotes commensal bacteria-harboured plaque and calculus on dentition, and thus this is one among many risk factors for oral health problems, including dental caries, periodontal (gum) disease, tooth loss, and oral leukoplakia. The presence of these problems is often used as a proxy for poor oral hygiene, because they can be

objectively measured and do not rely on self-reports; however, their presence may have other drivers reflecting general poor health.

Regular oral hygiene, including use of toothpaste, is less common in low- and middle-income countries than in high-income countries, and is less common in older adults than in younger adults in general. The percentage of the older population who practice regular oral hygiene ranges from 7.9–41.7% in Africa to 32–84% in south-eastern Asia and 22.2–93% in Europe. Traditional oral self-care using chew sticks or powder is common in low- and middle-income countries.

### Cancer in humans

Poor oral hygiene was assigned a *high* priority by the 2019 Priorities Advisory Group (IARC, 2019a). However, consideration needs to be given as to the appropriate agent for evaluation. Researchers in this area have taken one or more of the following approaches to defining exposure.

1. *Behaviours related to hygiene.* As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), behaviours such as minimal brushing or non-brushing of teeth have been investigated as possibly associated with specific types of cancer. More studies along these lines have appeared since that report. In the *IARC Monographs* programme, behaviours are generally not evaluated as potential carcinogens, with exceptions being those behaviours related to the use of harmful substances (e.g. tobacco, opium) and various occupations. Evaluation of such behaviours as non-brushing of teeth would therefore represent, to some degree, a departure for the *IARC Monographs* programme.
2. *Health-related conditions.* Several studies, including those that considered the role of behaviours, as summarized in item (1), have been conducted to examine relations between oral or dental health conditions, particularly periodontitis and tooth loss, and the occurrence of specific types of cancer. While such conditions may lie on a pathway that leads to cancer, in the *IARC Monographs* context they would normally be viewed as pathological health states in their own right and therefore not eligible for evaluation as carcinogens.
3. *Infectious pathogens.* As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), some infectious pathogens of the head and neck are already classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), e.g. human papillomavirus (for oral cancer) and Epstein–Barr virus (EBV, for nasopharyngeal cancer). Other pathogens, particularly bacterial species found in the oral cavity that are understood to contribute causally to periodontitis and related conditions, have become a more recent focus of investigation. This line of investigation builds on expanding interest in the role of perturbations in the microbiome at various body sites as causal factors in a range of health conditions, including cancer. See, for example, the systematic reviews by Su Mun et al. (2021) and Reitano et al. (2021), reporting, respectively, on findings for oral cancer and digestive cancers. Virtually all of the reviewed studies were case–control studies, and a high proportion were recent, with over half of those included in the systematic reviews having been published in the previous 3 years. Some studies have also focused on relations between specific oral bacterial species and cancer, with a particular interest in the role of the periodontitis pathogens *Porphyromonas gingivalis* and *Fusobacterium nucleatum* (agent 002 in the present report).

A large number of studies, mostly case–control studies, have been designed to consider one or more of these types of factor. For example, a systematic review by Bai et al. (2023) focused on cancers of the oral

cavity at multiple sites and found associations with poor or absent dental hygiene behaviours. In several systematic reviews, consistent associations between periodontitis and cancer have been identified, with relative risks in the range 1.5–4, varying by cancer site (e.g. Corbella et al., 2018, and Li et al., 2021a for colorectal cancer). Studies of perturbations in the oral microbiome produced conflicting results, with levels of some bacterial species observed to be more elevated in tumour specimens while other species were found at lower levels, compared with controls. Associations with the presence of *Fusobacterium nucleatum* in tumour tissue, as opposed to the oral cavity, have been summarized in systematic reviews on cancers of the head and neck (Bronzato et al., 2020) and colorectum (Gethings-Behncke et al., 2020).

As noted, the options of defining the exposure as either a behaviour (poor dental hygiene practice) or a disease (periodontitis) are not consistent with the usual approach taken in the *IARC Monographs* programme to define exposures. Therefore, the most likely candidates for evaluation would be one or more of the bacterial species found in the oral cavity, particularly those responsible for inflammatory diseases, such as periodontitis. Issues to be addressed in examining such bacterial species as potential cancer-causing agents include the following. Many species of bacteria are present in the oral cavity microbiome, and there are complex relations between them and, so far, little standardization over testing. In the case-control study designs that predominate in this field, there is a possibility that the occurrence or detection of bacterial species could be influenced by the cancer itself or its treatment, raising the issue of reverse causation. Known risk factors for specific cancers, including diet, alcohol, and tobacco, might also be associated with the oral microbiome; this should be carefully taken into account.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Specific pathways proposed for the action of oral bacteria in causing cancer are the creation of an inflammatory environment and the suppression of immunological function responsible for surveillance of abnormal cells (reviewed e.g. for *Fusobacterium nucleatum* by Alon-Maimon et al., 2022).

### **Summary**

The most appropriate agents for consideration by the *IARC Monographs* programme are the pathogenic bacterial species recognized as causes of chronic periodontitis and related conditions. *Fusobacterium nucleatum*, which appears to be the best-studied specific agent in this regard, is described elsewhere in the present report (agent 002). The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of poor oral hygiene is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **004 *Helicobacter pylori***

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

*Helicobacter pylori* (infection with) was classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100B in 2009 (IARC, 2012a). There is *sufficient* evidence that infection with *H. pylori* causes stomach cancer (including both cardia and non-cardia) and low-grade B-cell mucosa associated lymphoid tissue (MALT) gastric lymphoma in humans.

### **Exposure characterization**

*H. pylori* is a Gram-negative helical bacterium. It is common throughout the world; in most countries, over one third of the population is infected (Eusebi et al., 2014). However, it is most common in lower-

income countries in Asia and Africa, where it may be found in over 80% of the population. Active pharmaceutical intervention has reduced the exposure prevalence in some high-income countries, but exposure remains widespread.

### Cancer in humans

Since the last evaluation, given in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100B, intense interest has been focused on understanding the nature and potency of different strains of *H. pylori* in causing cancer of the stomach and gastric cardia. A recent study estimated that, in Asia, 79% of non-cardia gastric cancers and 62% of cardia gastric cancers are caused by infection with *H. pylori*, with high percentages in Europe and North America as well (Gu et al., 2023). The evidence for a causal role for *H. pylori* in MALT gastric lymphomas also remains strong.

For other cancers, increasing attention has been paid to other digestive tract cancers, including cancers of the oesophagus, pancreas, bile ducts, and colorectum. In a systematic review, Panthangi et al. (2022) identified positive associations between *H. pylori* infection and cancers of the pancreas in 6 of 15 identified studies, including some case–control studies in which exposure was measured after cancer diagnosis. Findings from the reviewed prospective cohort studies or nested case–control studies (in which serum infection was analysed before cancer diagnosis) were mixed. For example, positive associations were seen in a nested case–control study conducted among male smokers in Finland (Stolzenberg-Solomon et al., 2001); however, this finding did not persist in a later analysis of this cohort using a different exposure metric and with a longer period of follow-up (Yu et al., 2013). In a separate meta-analysis, a positive association with pancreatic cancer was observed for cytotoxin-associated gene A (CagA)-negative strains of *H. pylori* (meta-odds ratio, meta-OR, 1.30; 95% confidence interval, CI, 1.02–1.65), but not overall or for CagA-positive strains (Schulte et al., 2015). In a summary review of meta-analyses, Maisonneuve and Lowenfels (2015) concluded that there was “moderate” evidence of a role of *H. pylori* in pancreatic cancer.

Zumkeller et al. (2006) reported a meta-OR of 1.4 (95% CI, 1.1–1.8), based on 11 studies of colorectal cancer, but expressed some concerns about publication bias. By contrast, there is substantial evidence of an inverse association between oesophageal adenocarcinoma, although this has been seen as somewhat paradoxical, given the positive association between *H. pylori* infection and gastroesophageal reflux disease and Barrett oesophagus, which are both strong risk factors for oesophageal adenocarcinoma (Polyzos et al., 2018).

There have also been recent analyses of respiratory cancers in relation to *H. pylori* infection. Two meta-analyses yielded meta-ORs of 3.28 (95% CI, 1.91–5.63) for larynx cancer (Zhou et al., 2016) and 2.29 (95% CI, 1.34–3.91) for lung cancer (Mounika, 2013). For both larynx and lung cancer, prospective studies have been unavailable; thus, the temporality of the association remains unclear.

### Mechanistic evidence

Some evidence of *H. pylori* infection in extragastric tissues provides support for some of the mechanisms, such as inflammation and apoptosis, observed for cancers within the gastrointestinal tract; this evidence seems to be growing (Lim et al., 2023a).

### Summary

For several cancer types, there appears to be emerging evidence of an association with *H. pylori* infection. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *Helicobacter pylori* to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)



## 005 *Salmonella typhi*

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*Salmonella typhi* (*S. enterica* serovar Typhi) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. *S. typhi* was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

*S. typhi* is a bacterium that is excreted in faeces and mainly transmitted by faecally contaminated water, sewage, and food items (Monack, 2012). Transmission may also occur in food prepared by a chronic carrier. Humans are the only reservoir of the infection. About 2–5% of infected individuals may develop a chronic carrier state, in which the bacterium persists in the gall bladder (Levine et al., 1982). Annually, there are an estimated 20 million cases of typhoid fever globally (Crump et al., 2004). India and sub-Saharan Africa are considered areas of high endemicity (Gunn et al., 2014).

### Cancer in humans

There have been a number of studies, as well as several systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Nagaraja and Eslick, 2014; Koshiol et al., 2016; Duijster et al., 2021) to examine the relation between *S. typhi* infection and gall bladder cancer. Nagaraja and Eslick (2014) reviewed published studies, in which people with and without gall bladder cancer were compared as to the presence of *S. typhi* antibodies or positive culture, as well as a smaller number of cohort studies that included follow-up for people with chronic infection. These studies were generally consistent, demonstrating ORs for either antibody or culture positivity that were well above 1.0, with meta-analytic ORs of 4.28 (95% CI, 1.84–9.96) for chronic carriers and 5.86 (95% CI, 3.84–8.95) on restriction to control participants without gall stones. Limitations noted were small numbers of case participants, a lack of well-matched controls (with or without gallstones), and a lack of homogeneous methods for the detection of *S. typhi*.

Few studies have been conducted to examine the link between *S. typhi* and cancers in other sites, including liver and large bowel. Mellemegaard and Gaarslev (1988) calculated standardized incidence ratios (SIRs) for different cancers and found no increased risk for liver or colon cancer, although the number of cases was small.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Catalano et al. (2023), in an intestinal stem cell murine model, reported that *Salmonella enterica* serovar Typhimurium can alter Wnt/b-catenin signalling by the translocation of antigens through a pathogenicity island (Spi) 2–encoded type III secretion system, thus allows the dissemination of the bacteria in the liver and bloodstream. Increased mRNA expression of Wnt family members (Wnt2, Wnt3, Wnt6, Wnt9a, and Wnt11) and WNT signaling proteins Fzd2, Fzd4, Fzd6, Fzd7, Fzd8, and Fzd9 genes were observed.

The induction of Wnt2 and Wnt11 expression was attributed to *Salmonella* AvrA, a bacterial effector involved in the control of  $\beta$ -catenin ubiquitination and stabilization. The data suggested a role of *S. typhi* in the activation of the Wnt pathway, leading to cholangiocarcinoma. Another study showed that *S. typhi* plays a role in colon cancer transformation by modulating mitogen-activated protein kinase (MAPK)-Akt and Wnt/ $\beta$ -catenin signalling pathways (Mughini-Gras et al., 2018). *S. typhi* has been shown to alter cell signalling pathways and regulate their expression (Scanu et al., 2015). *S. typhi* infection releases specific toxins, called cytolethal distending toxins, which cause DNA damage and cell cycle inhibition, leading to gall bladder cancer (Di Domenico et al., 2017; Sheweita and Alsamghan, 2020; Li et al., 2021b). Jahan et

al. (2022) postulated that *S. typhi* is an intracellular pathogen that evades the innate detection and immune response of the host body, leading to systemic dissemination, and contributing to the damage of epithelium cells.

### Summary

*S. typhi* has been successfully controlled in many countries by sanitary measures. *S. typhi* is a pathogen with a high pathogenic capacity in both humans and animals and is associated with a high rate of cancer in patients with chronic typhoid-induced typhoid fever disease. Gall bladder cancer is commonly associated with *S. typhi*, mainly owing to its ability to form biofilms in cholesterol coagulates in the biliary stream. There is epidemiological evidence of a potentially strong association with gall bladder cancer, although the published studies have limitations. Results derived from studies of cancer in experimental animals are sparse. There is mechanistic evidence indicating that *S. typhi* exhibits certain KCs, such as cell proliferation, DNA damage, inflammation, and modified signalling pathways that lead to cancer. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *Salmonella typhi* to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 006 Nitrate-reducing bacteria in tobacco

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Nitrate-reducing bacteria in tobacco have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Nitrate-reducing bacteria, such as those in the *Enterobacteriaceae* family and in the *Corynebacterium* and *Staphylococcus* genera, play a crucial role in tobacco products by converting nitrate to nitrite under anaerobic conditions during fermentation, ageing, or storage of tobacco. These bacteria's dissimilatory nitrate reductases (respiratory nitrate reductases and periplasmic nitrate reductases) are key in generating and exporting nitrite, which reacts with tobacco alkaloids to form tobacco-specific nitrosamines (TSNAs), such as *N*'-nitrosonornicotine (NNN) and 4-(*N*-nitrosomethylamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanone (NNK), both classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1). Tobacco smoking and smokeless tobacco, also classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) and used worldwide, lead to exposure to TSNAs (Liu et al., 2023a; Stanfill et al., 2023). However, no specific data on exposure circumstances for this agent were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

There is no mechanistic evidence that the nitrate-reducing bacteria in tobacco, per se, exhibit any of the KCs. It has been shown that TSNAs are genotoxic and that these TSNAs are formed when bacteria convert nitrate to nitrite in tobacco products (Stanfill et al., 2023). However, these bacteria are not fully characterized.

## Summary

Apart from their involvement in the formation of various carcinogenic compounds in tobacco products, there is an absence of evidence that nitrate-producing bacteria in tobacco have a direct carcinogenic effect by themselves or that they exhibit the KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of nitrate-reducing bacteria in tobacco is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 007 Hepatitis D virus

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Hepatitis D virus (HDV) was evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 59 in 1993 (IARC, 1994a). HDV was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

HDV is a bloodborne RNA virus that can only infect those who are already infected with hepatitis B virus (HBV), i.e. positive for hepatitis B surface antigen (HBsAg), so all HDV-positive individuals will also be positive for HBsAg. An estimated 12 million to 72 million people are infected with HDV worldwide (Negro et al., 2023). The global estimated anti-HDV prevalence is 4.5% (95% CI, 3.6–5.7) among HBsAg-positive people. Regional estimates of anti-HDV for HBsAg-positive people range from 3.0% in Europe to 6.0% in Africa (Stockdale et al., 2020). The virus is spread through injecting drugs, needle-stick injuries, haemodialysis, or sexual exposure.

### Cancer in humans

As HBV is a known carcinogen, the assumption that coinfection with HDV could increase the likelihood of developing liver cancer in individuals infected with both is plausible. However, data reviewed up to 1993 were not conclusive on this point. Since then, several large cohort studies of HBV-infected individuals have found that those who are coinfecting with HDV are at an increased risk of liver cancer. All of the informative cohort studies were published since the previous IARC evaluation, almost all since 2000, whereas most of the negative studies were case–control investigations, many published before the IARC evaluation. Of the cohort studies, a study in France (Mallet et al., 2017), among > 48 000 patients who were chronically infected with HBV, reported a relative risk of 1.53 (95% CI, 1.39–1.68) for liver cancer for those who were coinfecting with HDV. A published meta-analysis (Alfaia et al., 2020) reported a pooled OR for liver cancer of 1.28 (95% CI, 1.05–1.57), although there was considerable heterogeneity between the studies. When stratified by study type, the summary OR was 1.67 (95% CI, 1.28–2.18) for 25 cohort studies and 1.10 (95% CI, 0.82–1.49) for 68 case–control studies. Analyses restricted to 11 prospectively recruited cohort studies found a relative risk of 2.77 (95% CI, 1.79–4.28). Further analyses of studies that had reported findings among individuals negative for infection with hepatitis C virus (HCV) (classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) and a cause of liver cancer) found a relative risk of liver cancer in relation to HDV of 1.62 (95% CI, 1.04–2.54). A similar analysis for those negative for HIV, also classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), strongly associated with an increased risk of liver cancer, found a relative risk of 1.60 (95% CI, 1.09–3.05). A more recent analysis of specimens stored for 1556 HBV-positive individuals with HIV as part of the pooled Swiss HIV and EuroSIDA cohort studies found a hazard ratio (HR) of 6.3 (95% CI, 2.5–16.0) for HCC for those who were positive for HDV, compared with those who were not (Béguelin et al., 2023).

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Uncertainty remains as to whether HDV has direct oncogenic effects, since it relies on HBV for infectivity and the machinery needed for replication (Rizzetto et al., 1977). HDV may, instead, enhance the effects of HBV in the development of HCC (Puigvehí et al., 2019). In a study of mice, HBV–HDV coinfection was found to elicit a stronger inflammation response than HBV mono-infection (Giersch et al., 2015). One of the pathways by which HBV induces inflammation is through activation of nuclear factor kappa  $\beta$  (NF- $\kappa$ B); HDV has also been observed to activate NF- $\kappa$ B signalling (Park et al., 2009a).

HDV may also elicit epigenetic changes that contribute to the occurrence of cancer. In a cell-line study, HDV was shown to induce expression of DNA methyltransferase 3  $\beta$ , altering DNA methylation patterns that might have affected cell cycle progression (Benegiamo et al., 2013). In a study of liver specimens from patients with hepatitis-associated HCC, dysregulation of the Y3 long non-coding RNA (lncRNA) was observed among those with HDV-related HCC (Zhang et al., 2016a).

### Summary

A review of the cohort studies that have been performed since the last evaluation, in 1993, finds that there appears to be substantial evidence for an etiological role of HDV infection. There is a lack of evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Mechanistic evidence remains sparse. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of HDV to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years).

## 008 Human cytomegalovirus

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Human cytomegalovirus (HCMV) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. HCMV was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of mechanistic evidence related to activation of pro-oncogenic pathways.

### Exposure characterization

HCMV is a ubiquitous human herpesvirus that is associated with widespread persistent infection (Sinclair and Sissons, 2006). The seroprevalence of HCMV ranges from 40% to 90% (Sinclair and Sissons, 2006; Fowler et al., 2022). Seroprevalence has been found to be higher in women compared with men, older compared with younger age groups, and in LMICs compared with high-income countries (Fowler et al., 2022). Infection occurs via body fluids (e.g. blood, saliva, semen, urine) or through transplacental transfer, blood transfusion, or organ transplantation (de Melo Silva et al., 2021; Fowler et al., 2022). Infected individuals will remain infected for life; however, viral replication can be suppressed by the immune system (Savva et al., 2013).

Inside the body, the virus infects several cell types, particularly lymphocytes. As most tissues will contain blood (including lymphocytes), it is particularly difficult to interpret studies based on the presence of HCMV in tissue samples (Vanarsdall and Johnson, 2012; Griffiths and Reeves, 2021).

### Cancer in humans

Associations between cancer and HCMV have been investigated in a variety of studies evaluating cancers of the brain, breast, colorectum, stomach, and other sites. Several reviews, systematic reviews, and

meta-analyses have been published (Bai et al., 2016; Farias et al., 2019; Richardson et al., 2020). In a meta-analysis, Farias et al. (2019) pooled data from 32 studies, with a total of 2190 participants or specimens, and noted a significant association (adjusted OR, 3.0; 95% CI, 1.7–5.3) between HCMV and glioma. In another meta-analysis, Bai et al. (2016) pooled data from 11 studies to examine the prevalence of HCMV in tumour tissues and determine the association between HCMV and colorectal cancer. The tumour tissues showed evidence of a significantly higher rate of virus infection than that for normal tissues from controls (OR, 6.59, 95% CI, 4.48–9.69). Richardson et al. (2020) observed mixed evidence regarding a role for HCMV infection in relation to breast cancer risk.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of HCMV in humanized animal models were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Studies of human cell lines have demonstrated that HCMV infection exhibits evidence of various KCs, including alteration of cellular proliferation, angiogenesis, metabolic reprogramming, inhibition of apoptosis, and immortalization (Nauc  r et al., 2019). These effects appear to be driven by several oncogenes encoded in the HCMV genome. In a study of peripheral blood lymphocytes (PBLs) collected from 20 smokers and 20 non-smokers, infection of PBLs with HCMV was associated with a doubling in the frequency of chromosome aberrations, independent of smoking status (Albrecht et al., 2004). Many human cell-line studies have also found HCMV infection to induce chromosome aberrations (Nauc  r et al., 2019), which appear to be driven by expression of HCMV oncogenes (Siew et al., 2009). Additionally, these oncogenes have various immunosuppressive effects that influence both innate and adaptive immune responses. For example, HCMV viral proteins have been observed to suppress natural killer (NK) cell activity (Tomasec et al., 2000) and antigen presentation to T cells (Yang and Bjorkman, 2008).

### **Summary**

The literature was reviewed by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities; a review of the evidence that has accumulated since then has revealed convincing evidence for an association between HCMV and glioma and colorectal cancer. There is a lack of evidence regarding cancer in experimental animals. Mechanistic evidence related to the activation of pro-oncogenic pathways remains compelling. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of human cytomegalovirus to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **009 Human papillomavirus genus beta**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Human papillomavirus genus beta ( $\beta$ -HPV) was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 90 in 2005 (IARC, 2007), with the notable exception that HPV5 and HPV8 were classified as *carcinogenic* to patients with epidermodysplasia verruciformis (EV). Subsequently, in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100B (IARC, 2012a), human papillomavirus genera beta and gamma were re-evaluated as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3), with the notable exception that HPV5 and HPV8 were classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in patients with EV.

$\beta$ -HPV (cutaneous types) was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer and mechanistic evidence.

Considering that many types of HPV have been classified in different groups (IARC, 2012b) and that there is extensive heterogeneity in cancer studies for different types of HPV, it is necessary to specify which types of HPV should be investigated and which stream of studies could change the classification of specific types.

### **Exposure characterization**

$\beta$ -HPV is one of the five major HPV genera (alpha, beta, gamma, nu, and mu). There are more than 50 types of  $\beta$ -HPV (Tommasino, 2017). They are typically found on the skin and can be considered commensal to humans; asymptomatic infections may persist for several years (Sichero et al., 2019; Al-Soneidar et al., 2023). Transmission of  $\beta$ -HPVs among humans is primarily through skin-to-skin contact (Nunes et al., 2017). Infection is detected by serology and viral DNA detection. Seropositivity for at least one  $\beta$ -HPV in the population is estimated to be up to 70%; prevalence is greater in men. Seroprevalence of cutaneous  $\beta$  HPVs is positively associated with higher ambient ultraviolet (UV) radiation exposure (Antonsson et al., 2003; Kricker et al., 2020).

### **Cancer in humans**

$\beta$ -HPVs may contribute to the development of non-melanoma skin cancer, especially cutaneous SCC, in individuals with EV, which is a rare genetic disorder characterized by heightened susceptibility to  $\beta$ -HPV infection. Similarly, immunosuppressed recipients of organ transplants have an increased susceptibility to  $\beta$ -HPV infections on the skin and exhibit an elevated risk of cutaneous SCC in later years (Ramezani et al., 2020). Although HPV5 and HPV8 have shown an associated increased risk of cutaneous SCC in healthy individuals (Chahoud et al., 2016), owing to differences in complexities, such as heterogeneities in assays used, as found in a review of case-series studies (Neagu et al., 2023), the role of different types of  $\beta$ -HPV in the progression of cutaneous SCC in the general population and in immunocompetent individuals remains inconclusive.

In a cohort study in Florida, USA, in 1008 individuals who underwent screening tests for skin cancer, the detection of baseline  $\beta$ -HPV significantly predicted the occurrence of cutaneous SCC (HR, 4.32; 95% CI, 1.00–18.66; 149 cases), although HPV DNA was only detected in a small proportion of tumour specimens at the time of diagnosis (Rollison et al., 2021). This study also revealed an association between a larger number of  $\beta$ -HPV types detected in DNA assays and the risk of cutaneous SCC. Furthermore, a nested case–control study, in 385 cases of cutaneous SCC in New South Wales, Australia, found that the presence of  $\beta$ -HPV1 DNA and  $\beta$ -HPV3 DNA significantly increased the risk of cutaneous SCC by 30–40%. This study also demonstrated a positive association between each additional positive  $\beta$ -HPV DNA type and cutaneous SCC (OR, 1.07; 95% CI, 1.02–1.12) (Kricker et al., 2022). Both studies used detailed HPV typing in both normal tissue and skin tumours and both antibody markers in blood specimens and DNA detection in skin and hair samples. However, antibody markers did not indicate a significant association in either study.

A systematic review to explore the association between  $\beta$ -HPVs and cutaneous SCC in immunosuppressed patients found that the prevalence of overall  $\beta$ -HPVs and certain  $\beta$ -HPV types (5, 8, 9, 17, 49, 75, and 76) in immunosuppressed patients with cutaneous SCC was significantly higher than in controls (Ramezani et al., 2020). A similar systematic review showed that the prevalence of HPV infection is higher in immunosuppressed patients with cutaneous SCC than in immunocompetent patients with cutaneous SCC (pooled effect size, 3.01; 95% CI, 2.00–4.52). This review also found a positive association between cutaneous SCC and  $\beta$ -HPV when compared with controls without cancer (pooled effect size, 3.43; 95% CI, 1.97–5.98) (Wang et al., 2014). Another systematic review to assess the association between  $\beta$ -HPV and cutaneous SCC in immunocompetent individuals found, among the 14 studies included for meta-analysis, which involved 3112 cases of cutaneous SCC and 6020 controls, an adjusted pooled OR of 1.42 (95% CI, 1.18–1.72) (Chahoud et al., 2016).

$\beta$ -HPVs have also been studied for their association with other cancers. A case–control study in New South Wales (Kricker et al., 2022) observed an association between each additional positive  $\beta$ -HPV DNA type and basal cell carcinoma (BCC) (OR, 1.06; 95% CI, 1.03–1.10; 833 cases). However, other studies (Boxman et al., 2000; Escutia et al., 2011; Al-Soneidar et al., 2023) produced inconsistent results. Such inconsistency was also observed in the Florida cohort study (Rollison et al., 2021), involving 132 cases of BCC, in which baseline  $\beta$ -HPV detection and subsequent development of BCC did not show a clear association.

Other epidemiological studies with different biomarkers of  $\beta$ -HPV infections have also been conducted to assess an association with the development of head and neck SCC (Sabol et al., 2016; Agalliu et al., 2018; Karimi et al., 2022). Despite some indications of a positive association between oral  $\beta$ -HPV5 or  $\beta$ -HPV38 and the risk of oropharyngeal, oral cavity, and laryngeal SCCs (Agalliu et al., 2018), general findings were inconclusive.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of  $\beta$ -HPV infection and cancer in experimental animal models were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

HPVs replicate only in humans. Transgenic mouse models are available to study HPV carcinogenesis (Dorfer and Handisurya, 2020), but not cancer etiology in the context of natural viral infections, as described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100B (IARC, 2012a).

The potential carcinogenicity of  $\beta$ -HPV has been studied in tissue culture and in transgenic mice. The main viral oncoproteins E6 and E7 from  $\beta$ -2 HPV38 and  $\beta$ -HPV49 can immortalize primary human keratinocytes, which are the natural host of the virus (Caldeira et al., 2003; Accardi et al., 2006; Cornet et al., 2012). However, E6 and E7 from other  $\beta$ -HPVs (14, 22, 23, 24, 36) did not induce immortalization in primary human keratinocytes (Cornet et al., 2012). Other studies showed that some  $\beta$ -HPVs (5, 8, 38) deregulate cell cycle, DNA repair, apoptosis, and cell differentiation (Howley and Pfister, 2015; reviewed in Tommasino, 2017). Consequently, the cells may become more susceptible to mutagenic properties of UV-A and UV-B (if exposed to UV radiation) (Viarisio et al., 2017; Bandolin et al., 2020). In normal human epidermal keratinocytes (NHEKs),  $\beta$ -HPV5 E6/E7 oncoproteins significantly enhanced IL-8, monocyte chemoattractant protein-1 (MCP-1), and intercellular adhesion molecule-1 (ICAM-1) expression. In contrast, other  $\beta$ -HPVs, such as HPV38, were able to reduce the induction of the proinflammatory molecules (De Andrea et al., 2007). Interestingly, inducible nitric oxide synthase (iNOS) expression levels and nitric oxide (NO) production were induced at similar levels by all the HPV genotypes tested (De Andrea et al., 2007). In addition, keratinocytes expressing HPV8 estradiol-17 $\beta$  (E2) induced enhanced levels of IL-8 (Venuti et al. 2019). Finally, it has been described that  $\alpha$ -HPV types are associated with oxidative stress and chronic inflammation in cancer of the cervix (García-Quiroz et al., 2022).

Transgenic mouse models expressing the oncoproteins E6 and E7 from different  $\beta$ -HPV types (8, 20, 27, 38) in the skin under the control of a keratinocyte-specific promoter were observed to have increased susceptibility to UV-induced carcinogenesis (Michel et al., 2006; Marcuzzi et al., 2009; Viarisio et al., 2011). Transgenic mice expressing  $\beta$ -2 HPV38 E6/E7 genes had a higher incidence of cutaneous SCC than did wildtype mice, which did not develop any type of skin lesion (Viarisio et al., 2018). In addition, other mouse models are available, which involve naturally infecting mice with their corresponding papillomavirus, *Mus musculus* papillomavirus 1 (MmuPV1). MmuPV1 is able to infect immunodeficient as well as immunocompetent laboratory mouse strains (Uberoi and Lambert, 2017). In this experimental model, studies described a connection between UV radiation, MmuPV1, immunosuppression, and the development

of skin lesions (Uberoi et al., 2016; Uberoi and Lambert, 2017). Studies in vitro showed functional similarities between the E6 proteins from  $\beta$ -1 HPV8 and from MmuPV1 (Meyers et al., 2017, 2018).

In skin carcinogenesis,  $\beta$ -HPV probably interferes with the host cell at the beginning of carcinogenesis, enhancing the susceptibility to UV exposure. Indeed, not all neoplastic human keratinocyte carcinomas contain a copy of viral  $\beta$ -HPV (Weissenborn et al., 2005), and  $\beta$ -HPV does not usually integrate into the host cell genome (Viarisio et al., 2017; Bandolin et al., 2020). This proposed mechanism is called hit-and-run. In contrast, the  $\alpha$ -HPV-induced carcinogenesis involves expression of the oncoproteins E6 and E7, which is required at each step of carcinogenesis, as well as for the preservation of the neoplastic phenotype (Bandolin et al., 2020).

### Summary

Recent informative human studies published since the last meeting of the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities show a consistent association between  $\beta$ -HPV types and SCC. There was a lack of evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

Some  $\beta$ -HPVs show KCs, including immortalization and alteration of cell proliferation and DNA repair in primary human keratinocytes. Mechanistic data may suggest a potential link between UV radiation, certain  $\beta$ -HPV types, and the development of skin lesions. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of human papillomavirus genus beta to be warranted. Given the complexity of the agent, the Advisory Group suggests a careful focus on specific  $\beta$  HPV species in the next evaluation.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 010 Merkel cell polyomavirus

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Merkel cell polyomavirus (MCV) was classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 104 in 2012 (IARC, 2014a). MCV was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new epidemiological studies of the association between MCV and Merkel cell carcinoma (MCC) and new mechanistic data (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

MCV is one of 15 currently known polyomaviruses found in humans (Bopp et al., 2021). The primary infection is asymptomatic and may occur in the first year of life, presumably through direct skin contact or via the respiratory tract. MCV DNA can be detected on healthy skin; prevalence and viral load have been shown to increase with age (Silling et al., 2022). Dermal fibroblasts may be the primary host cell type, and may be naturally and productively infected by MCV (Liu et al., 2016a). MCV has also been shown to infect non-malignant tonsillar tissue (Saláková et al., 2016), non-neoplastic hepatocytes and bile duct epithelium (Klufah et al., 2020), and non-neoplastic B-cells (e.g. reactive hyperplasia and normal lymph node) (Klufah et al., 2021). MCV DNA has also been detected in non-neoplastic tissues of the thyroid gland, adrenal gland, spleen, bone marrow, stomach, gall bladder, pancreas, heart, and aorta (Matsushita et al., 2013).

### Cancer in humans

An etiological role of MCV in MCC is supported by case-series and case-control studies, and one cohort study. In case-series studies (21 studies with more than 850 cases of MCC), MCV has been detected in approximately 80% of cases (IARC, 2014a; NTP, 2016c). Case-control studies show ORs ranging from 4.4 (95% CI, 0.99–26.7) to 6.6 (95% CI, 2.3–18.8) for serological markers of MCV infection (Carter et al., 2009; Viscidi et al., 2011) and from 16.9 (95% CI, 7.8–36.7) to 63.2 (95% CI, 24.4–164.0) for serological markers



of viral early gene expression (Paulson et al., 2010). Of note, a prospective study also demonstrated a temporal relation between MCV infection and an increased risk of MCC (OR, 4.4; 95% CI, 1.3–17.4) (Faust et al., 2014).

In terms of evidence of an association between MCV and other cancers, the findings are mixed and based mostly on studies examining the presence of viral DNA in tumours, limiting inference regarding a causal role. In a prospective cohort study, no significant associations were observed between baseline markers of MCV infections and cutaneous SCC or BCC. Fewer than 4.5% of baseline MCV infections were also subsequently detected in keratinocyte cancers (Amorrortu et al., 2021). In a cohort of patients with primary laryngeal SCC, 7% of tumours were MCV positive (Geng et al., 2022). MCV infection may also be associated with a higher risk of glioma (OR, 1.56; 95% CI, 1.10–2.19) (Egan et al., 2021). MCV has been detected in a higher proportion of breast cancer specimens, compared with benign breast disease specimens (14% versus 2%,  $P = 0.02$ ) (Peng et al., 2014). In another breast cancer study, MCV was detected in 3% of breast cancers and none of the non-tumour controls (Reza et al., 2015). MCV has also been detected in oral SCC, with a reported prevalences of 6.6–29%, and in pharyngeal cancer, with a reported prevalence of 50%, but was not detected in a study of head and neck cancers among people who neither smoked tobacco nor drank alcohol (Mulder et al., 2021). Four epithelial ovarian cancers out of 98 (4%) (Robertson et al., 2023) and two cholangiocarcinomas out of 35 (6%) were positive for MCV (Klufah et al., 2020). MCV has also been detected in neoplastic B-cells, e.g. chronic lymphocytic leukaemia cells (Klufah et al., 2021). The MCV genome was detected by polymerase chain reaction (PCR) and fluorescence in situ hybridization (FISH) in 5 out of 36 (14%) thymomas, while no thymic hyperplasias ( $n = 20$ ) or fetal thymic tissues were PCR positive for MCV (Chteinberg et al., 2019).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

There is a lack of in vivo models that reproduce natural MCV infection (Spurgeon, 2022).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The oncogenesis of MCV-associated MCC begins with the integration of MCV DNA into the host genome of human cells (Starrett et al., 2017). MCV affects several molecular pathways in the host cells, resulting in uncontrolled cell proliferation, cell death inhibition, and chronic inflammation (Vescovo et al., 2020). During viral infection, the early gene region is expressed immediately to produce two T antigens (oncoproteins): a small T antigen (sT) and a large T antigen (LT). The LT directly binds to and inhibits the retinoblastoma (RB) tumour suppressor, enhancing an unregulated cell cycle progression (Spurgeon, 2022). The sT induces transformation of rodent fibroblast cells (Rat-1) and tumour formation in p53-null transgenic mice (Shuda et al., 2011, 2015). The interactions between MCV and DNA damage response pathways were reviewed by Studstill et al. (2023). MCV is able to induce the expression of type I and type III interferons during infection of human dermal fibroblasts (Wang et al., 2023a); Mendoza et al. (2020) concluded that MCV infection may induce a rich inflammatory response (Mendoza et al., 2020). MCV T antigens are also able to induce mRNA expression that suppresses genes involved in autophagy induction in MCC cell lines (Kumar et al., 2020) and to promote the glycolytic metabolism that may increase MCC growth (Berrios et al., 2016). The molecular mechanisms of MCV transformation and replication in the host cell are well summarized in the literature (Liu and You, 2020; Ahmed et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

Consistent findings from a case–control study and a recent prospective cohort study of the association between MCV and MCC support a re-evaluation of the classification for MCV. For other cancer types, the epidemiologic evidence is inconsistent and based mainly on studies from tissue samples. There is a lack of evidence in experimental animals. However, mechanistic evidence in epidemiological studies supports the

findings in the human cancer studies. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of Merkel cell polyomavirus to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## **011 Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 2 (SARS-CoV-2) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

SARS-CoV-2 is primarily transmitted by respiratory droplets and aerosols (WHO, 2020a). Aerosol transmission can occur in certain settings, such as enclosed spaces with poor ventilation, where infected individuals release particles that can be inhaled by others who are in close proximity or in the same space for an extended period (Jayaweera et al., 2020). Since the virus first appeared in 2019, 774 million cases of coronavirus disease (COVID-19), which is the disease caused by the SARS-CoV-2 virus, have been confirmed (as of March 2024), and exposure to the virus has been found in most individuals of all populations studied (WHO, 2024a). Determinants of severe infection among those infected include older age, male sex, higher body mass index (BMI), and comorbidities (Zhang et al., 2023c).

### **Cancer in humans**

Studies of the relation between SARS-CoV-2 and cancer have usually been focused on an increased risk of SARS-CoV-2 among those with cancer (Lee et al., 2021a). A recent study by Li et al. (2023a) used Mendelian randomization to examine the association between SARS-CoV-2 infection and cancer; most observed ORs were not significant and were approximately 1. Of note, the follow-up time since the epidemic occurred is only a few years. Given the large number of cohorts that have been assembled to examine the long-term effects of infection, additional studies with longer follow-up times are expected and should provide a stronger basis for evaluation of SARS-CoV-2 and cancer in the future.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies in cancer in experimental mice or rats were found, except one that suggested that spike protein (S1) from recombinant SARS-CoV-2 induces apoptosis and tumour regression in the lungs after chemical induction of tumours using NNK in A/J mice (Sheinin et al., 2022). Hence, the infection followed the cancer and appeared to be helpful in improving outcome. Non-murine experimental animal models (in, e.g. hamsters, cats, ferrets, bats, monkeys) have been and are being sought, owing to the natural resistance of mice to SARS-CoV-2 (Andrade et al., 2021). This resistance is explained by the differences between mouse and human angiotensin converting enzyme 2 (ACE2) that interfere with ACE2–spike complexing (Chu et al., 2022). However, nearly all animal models created thus far were used to investigate infection or immunity parameters, as opposed to cancer or cancer-related parameters. Overall, there are no cancer bioassays to suggest SARS-CoV-2 induces cancer in animals.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

An overwhelming amount of mechanistic evidence pertaining to inflammation and oxidative stress in exposed humans and cell lines exists. However, COVID-19 varies in duration, severity, and immune response character, and while there appear to be three response types (Royal Society of Canada, 2022) that may be relevant to cancer, owing to their inflammatory and oxidative natures, they usually only last weeks (they are not of a chronic nature). In long COVID-19, which lasts 2 months or longer (WHO, 2022a),

inflammation and immunosuppression are frequent and, paradoxically, may both be of relevance to carcinogenicity. It is known that four signalling pathways are common between SARS-CoV-2 infection and cancer: cytokine, interferon (IFN) type I, androgen receptor (AR), and immune checkpoint signalling (Zong et al., 2021). It is also known that the virus plays many other roles: it induces epigenetic alterations, including in circular RNAs; it induces oxidative stress; it induces receptor-mediated effects including the blocking of the tumour suppressor TP53, resulting in the disruption of apoptosis, which alters cell death, as well as inactivating Rb, thereby promoting E2F transcription factors (Policard et al., 2021); it increases proliferation and activates metastasis through vascular endothelial growth factor (VEGF) via IL-6 activation of signal transducer and activator of transcription (STAT) 3, or TNF $\alpha$ /NF- $\kappa$ B; it stimulates epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition; it leads to gut dysbiosis; it suppresses tumour formation through the renin–angiotensin–aldosterone system (see Jahankhani et al., 2023 for a review); it leads to metabolic reprogramming, including altered immunometabolism (Rudiansyah et al., 2022); and it facilitates malignant transformation in triple-negative breast cancer patients via the M protein (Nguyen et al., 2022), or via neutrophil extracellular traps (Francescangeli et al., 2020). However, only a handful of studies have been reported on each of these mechanisms and they, with others, are still under investigation. In addition, interindividual variability in human responses to long COVID-19 is considerable, exacerbating the incoherence in the data – both positive and negative correlations between SARS-CoV-2 infection and cancer have been reported (Li et al., 2022a) – and reducing consistency overall. Moreover, too little time has passed since this virus emerged (late 2019 or early 2020) for clinically observable carcinogenic consequences to have manifested. Importantly, neither severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus 1 (SARS-CoV-1) nor Middle East respiratory syndrome coronavirus (MERS-CoV) (related viruses for which outbreaks have occurred sufficiently long ago to detect any potential carcinogenicity) have been reported to be associated with cancer, and there is no direct evidence that SARS-CoV-2 acts like known oncogenic viruses (Jahankhani et al., 2023). For a brief and recent review of COVID-19 and cancer, see Costanzo et al. (2023). Overall, the evidence, while broad and evoking 7 of 10 KCs (KC4, KC5, KC6, KC7, KC8, KC9, KC10), remains relatively sparse. Meanwhile, in mouse models, one study showed that lung damage and antibody and cytokine responses were observed in Syrian golden hamsters with COVID-19 (Dhakal et al., 2021), but this study informed more about sex differences than potential cancer mechanisms. Andrade et al. (2021) found that C57BL/6J mice inoculated with mouse hepatitis virus 3 (MHV-3), a surrogate for SARS-CoV-2, developed severe acute lung damage and respiratory distress that preceded systemic inflammation and death, echoing the well-known potential role for inflammatory mechanisms, but its use of MHV-3 complicates any read-across.

### Summary

While a few studies of human cancer exist, the literature is sparse, and it is unlikely that a formal classification could be designated at this stage. There is no evidence for cancer in experimental animals. The mechanistic evidence also appears to be inconclusive. Most importantly, too little time has passed since this virus made its way onto the world stage for clinically observable carcinogenic consequences to have manifested. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of SARS-CoV-2 is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 012 *Toxoplasma gondii* (toxoplasmosis infection)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*Toxoplasma gondii* (toxoplasmosis infection) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

## Exposure characterization

Toxoplasmosis is a parasitic zoonosis caused by the protozoan *T. gondii*, which can infect humans and other mammals, such as birds, goats, sheep, domestic and feral cats, and other wild mammals. *T. gondii* is facultatively heteroxenous, having many routes of transmission across different host species (Tenter et al., 2000). The primary routes of exposure include ingestion of contaminated food or water, contact with cat faeces, and organ transplantation or blood transfusion. Across the life-cycle of *T. gondii*, it may be transmitted vertically during pregnancy, horizontally through ingestion of oocytes from the environment or trachyzoites or tissue cysts in infected meat or offal, or through contaminated blood products, tissue transplants, or unpasteurized milk (Tenter et al., 2000). The relative importance of the various routes of transmission differs geographically, based on livestock management, culture, and eating habits (Tenter et al., 2000). Nearly one third of humans have been exposed to *T. gondii*, with wide geographical variations globally (Rostami et al., 2020). A systematic review of the global prevalence of toxoplasmosis in pregnant women found an overall global prevalence of latent toxoplasmosis of 33.8%, the highest prevalence rates were in South America (56.2%) and the WHO African Region (48.7%), and the lowest prevalence rate was in the WHO Western Pacific Region (11.8%) (Rostami et al., 2020). The prevalence of *T. gondii* in asymptomatic neonates in Mexico was estimated to be 0.6% (Galvan-Ramirez et al., 2012), while the prevalence for adults in Germany was given as 55% (Wilking et al., 2016).

## Cancer in humans

There is controversy over whether *T. gondii* is a cancer inducer or suppressor, whether *T. gondii* can be used in cancer treatment, or whether having cancer puts one at risk of contracting a *T. gondii* infection or *T. gondii* exposure predisposes one to cancer (El Skhawy and Eissa, 2023). A systematic review showed that toxoplasmosis may be associated with an elevated risk of haematological malignancies (Kalantari et al., 2020); specifically, a meta-analysis of six small studies found that *T. gondii* infection might be associated with increased leukaemia risk (Huang et al., 2016). Another study (Hamouda et al., 2024) revealed a significantly higher seroprevalence of *T. gondii* infection in brain tumour cases (62.5%) compared with healthy controls (38%), and a strong association between *T. gondii* seropositivity and brain tumours diagnosed in childhood (OR, 2.7). *T. gondii* exposure was also associated with glioma and meningioma (Abdollahi et al., 2022).

## Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

*T. gondii* inoculated in adult male isogenic male Balb/c mice induced DNA damage (measured by the comet assay) in neutrophils but not in the liver and brain (Ribeiro et al., 2004). Also, *T. gondii* induced an inflammatory response in the mouse prostate, resulting in microglandular hyperplasia (Colinot et al., 2017).

TM3 Leydig cell-line co-culture with tachyzoites of *T. gondii* RH strain (Staurengo-Ferrari et al., 2021) produced increased levels of testosterone, as well as of MCP-1 and IFN $\gamma$ . Also, *T. gondii* tachyzoites induced apoptosis in murine Leydig tumour cell line (MLTC-1) via the endoplasmic reticulum stress pathway (Wang et al., 2023b) and inhibited apoptosis in different cell lines (Dupont et al., 2023).

*T. gondii* infection specifically altered the levels of different microRNAs (miRNAs) involved in the regulation of processes such as apoptosis, inflammatory response, or the cell cycle, as well as an immune response in the host cell against the infection (de Faria Junior et al., 2021). The miR-17–92 cluster, one of the miRNAs upregulated during infection (Zeiner and Boothroyd, 2010), inhibits host cell apoptosis, a survival strategy of *Toxoplasma* (Lüder and Gross, 2005; Carmen and Sinai, 2007). Primary human astrocytic glioma tissue specimens overexpressed the miR-17–92 cluster, compared with non-neoplastic

brain control tissues. During infection, a decrease in phosphatase and tensin homologue (PTEN) in brain cells by miR-17–92 activated the Akt pathway, which promoted survival and growth in response to extracellular signals, resulting in brain cancer development (Laliberté and Carruthers, 2008). Overexpression of miR-17–92, involved in cell apoptosis and cytokine production, and miR-146a and miR-155, both involved in immune response, were reported in *T. gondii*-infected brain cells (Zeiner and Boothroyd, 2010; Cannella et al., 2014).

Transcriptomic analyses and in vitro cell culture models indicated that the gene signatures and molecular or cellular pathways, including inflammation, immune responses, proliferation, and metastasis, may be altered by *T. gondii*. The results support the concept that a parasite in tissues has the potential to contribute to molecular pathways of cancer or anti-tumour activity (Caner, 2021).

*T. gondii* infection caused oxidative stress in testis tissue in Wistar rats, with decreased activity of antioxidant enzymes and increased lipid peroxidation (Hoseiny Asl Nazarlu et al., 2020). In another study, (Türkoğlu et al., 2018), increased levels of superoxide dismutase (SOD) and glutathione peroxidase (GPx) were found in the rat liver with no changes in these enzymes in the blood, brain, or kidney after 30 days of inoculation of *T. gondii*.

### Summary

There is evidence of significant human exposure to *T. gondii*, and somewhat equivocal evidence of an association with glioma, meningioma, and leukaemia in human cancer studies; hence, a carcinogenicity evaluation is warranted to evaluate this evidence more carefully. There are no data on cancer in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that *T. gondii* exhibits KCs in experimental systems and perhaps in exposed humans, although most of the studies are small and prone to bias. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *Toxoplasma gondii* (toxoplasmosis infection) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 013 *Opisthorchis felineus*

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*Opisthorchis felineus* (infection with) was evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 61 in 1994 (IARC, 1994b). *O. felineus* was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

*O. felineus* (cat liver fluke) is a trematode parasite common in the Russian Federation (with an estimated 1.5 million infected individuals) but has also been detected in many countries of Europe. Humans acquire the parasite by eating raw or undercooked fish. The parasite can infect the liver, pancreas, and gall bladder (Pakharukova and Mordvinov, 2022).

### Cancer in humans

*O. felineus* is closely related to the liver fluke *O. viverrini*, which is endemic in south-eastern Asia and is classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1). However, there are very few studies of *O. felineus* and cancers of the liver and bile duct (Kovshirina et al., 2019; Fedorova et al., 2023). A case–control study by Fedorova et al. (2023) found that infection with *O. felineus* was associated with an OR for cancer of the bile duct of 3.9 (95% CI, 1.4–10.8). The study by Kovshirina was a report of two cases of bile duct cancer observed in patients infected with *O. felineus*.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Maksimova et al. (2017) found evidence of cholangiocarcinoma in Syrian golden hamster infected with *O. felineus* with oral administration of dimethyl nitrosamine. For cholangiocarcinoma specifically, it is thought, “The gross morphology and histology of the experimentally induced cholangiocarcinomas are similar to those found in humans, and are considered a suitable model for the study of cholangiocarcinoma”. (IARC, 2012a, p. 355). However, the Advisory Group noted that the cholangiosarcomas observed were due to exposure to dimethyl nitrosamine and not *O. felineus* infection. Hence, there are no studies to show carcinogenicity of *O. felineus* in experimental animals.

### Mechanistic evidence

At least four studies of cancer in Syrian golden hamsters demonstrate neoplastic characteristics associated with long-term *O. felineus* infection. A study by Semenov et al. (2016) showed hyperplasia and adenomatous transformation in portal tracts and biliary intraepithelial neoplasia in lobar bile ducts, with increased epithelial hyperplasia and invasive growth of cell cords in the bile ducts (Semenov et al., 2016). Gouveia et al. (2017) described portal area enlargement, inflammation, severe periductal fibrosis, and biliary intraepithelial neoplasia in male Syrian golden hamsters (only male hamsters were studied); however, incidence was not reported. Maksimova et al. (2017) found inflammation, bile duct dysplasia, periductal fibrosis, bile duct hyperplasia and proliferation, egg granuloma, and cysts. Pakharukova et al. (2019a) show time-dependent accumulation of oxidative hepatobiliary lesions through the detection of lipid peroxidation by-products 4-hydroxynonenal and malondialdehyde, which correlated with histopathological changes observed in the liver and accumulation of 8-hydroxy-2'-deoxyguanosine, a critical biomarker of oxidative stress and carcinogenesis (Pakharukova et al., 2019a). Gouveia et al. (2017) also identify oxysterol-like metabolites of *O. felineus* – similar to those described for *O. viverrini*. Overall, there appears to be ample evidence for the carcinogenicity of infection with *O. felineus*, because multiple positive results have been found across different studies, and mechanisms resemble *O. viverrini*, although all studies involve one species, the Syrian golden hamster, and differences of cancer induction may exist between hamsters and humans (IARC, 2012a, p. 355).

Numerous studies describing many KCs have been reported since the last review in 2019, including: Gouveia et al. (2017); Pakharukova et al. (2019a, b) (KC1, KC2, KC3, KC5, KC6, KC10); Kokova et al. (2020, 2021) (KC7); and Semenov et al. (2016), Maksimova et al. (2017), and Lvova et al. (2023) (KC6, KC10). Results in different systems are consistent, most often for KC6 and KC10, then KC1, KC2, KC3, and KC5, and, least often, KC7, and studies cover a gamut of relevant end-points. Overall, the mechanistic evidence appears to be strong.

### Summary

There is a scarcity of human cancer evidence. While there was a lack of adequate evidence in experimental animals, there appears to be ample mechanistic evidence of KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *Opisthorchis felineus* (infection with) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 014 *Schistosoma japonicum*

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*Schistosoma japonicum* (infection with) was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 61 in 1994 (IARC, 1994b), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans and experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

More than 200 million people worldwide contract schistosomiasis, an infection caused by parasitic flatworms (Steinmann et al., 2006). *S. japonicum* is a trematode parasite whose larvae can penetrate human skin. When individuals wade or immerse themselves in infested waters, such as ponds, lakes, or rivers, *S. japonicum* can penetrate the skin and infect the person (Wilson, 1987). This exposure commonly occurs during occupational and recreational activities. Activities such as farming, fishing, swimming, or washing clothes in infested water bodies are the main routes of exposure to *S. japonicum* (Ross et al., 1997). However, socioeconomic status and behavioural factors play a crucial role in contamination as well and the presence of other host reservoirs, such as cattle, buffalo, and pigs, also contributes to human infection (Raso et al., 2009). Snail density can also be a determining factor in human infection and reinfection (Seto et al., 2007). Congenital transmission in humans has not been confirmed (Shi et al., 2001).

### Cancer in humans

Since the evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* programme (IARC, 1994b), a few observational studies have been conducted in eastern Asia and south-eastern Asia, where the parasite is endemic (WHO, 2023a). In a study in Japan, an increase in the standardized mortality ratio (SMR) for liver cancer was observed in a region that was formerly endemic for schistosomiasis (Takemura et al., 1998). The study found that the SMRs for liver cancer for men, in the endemic area, were 1.88 in both 1985 and 1990. In this retrospective cohort study, the exposure was measured by assessing the history of residency in the area (Takemura et al., 1998). Qiu et al. (2005) conducted a matched case–control study in rural Sichuan, China, to assess the associations between previous *S. japonicum* infection and liver and colon cancers. The study included 127 cases of liver cancer and 142 cases of colon cancer. One or two controls were selected from patients diagnosed with an illness other than cancer from hospital records and matched by age, sex, hospital, and township for the same year that the cancer case was diagnosed. Study participants were restricted to those without evidence of hepatitis. The exposure, previous *Schistosoma* infection, was determined by examining the medical records or from interviews with the participants or their relatives. There was a significant association between *S. japonicum* infection and both liver cancer (OR, 3.7; 95% CI, 1.0–13) and colon cancer (OR, 3.3; 95% CI, 1.8–6.1). In a related study, Yang et al. (2023) investigated the clinicopathological characteristics of tumours from 1111 patients with gastric, liver, colon, or rectal cancer. That study suggested that schistosomiasis-associated digestive system tumours exhibit distinct clinicopathological features, compared with non-schistosomiasis tumours.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Eggs of *S. japonicum* trapped in the liver can induce a chronic inflammatory host response, which promotes the formation of egg granuloma and liver fibrosis (Liu et al., 2022a; Licá et al., 2023). In humans infected with *S. japonicum*, there is evidence that miRNAs play an important role in hepatic fibrosis by regulating cellular proliferation, the organization of extracellular matrix proteins, and lipid mobilization, and by limiting the oxidative damage stress (Cabantous et al., 2017). The miRNAs of these parasites may be

involved in carcinogenesis (Leija-Montoya et al., 2022). In experimental systems, concentrations of reactive oxygen species (ROS) are elevated in infected mouse liver tissues, where they enhance M2 macrophage differentiation (Yu et al., 2021a) and induce pyroptotic cell death (Kong et al., 2019). *S. japonicum* infection in mice induced liver inflammation, oxidative stress, proliferation, apoptosis, and metabolic reprogramming (Xu et al., 2019a; Zhao et al., 2021a; Ren et al., 2023). In addition, chronic schistosome infection could lead to systematic or local immune suppression in mouse models (Chen et al., 2012; Lundy and Lukacs, 2013; Lu et al., 2020a; Ren et al., 2023). Extracts of *S. japonicum* showed no mutagenicity in *Salmonella typhimurium* or *Escherichia coli* tests (Ishii et al., 1989).

Using a mouse model of colorectal cancer, Wu et al. (2020a) demonstrated that intraperitoneal injection of *S. japonicum* egg-specific protein (SjE) 16.7 promotes colorectal cancer progression, along with systemic myeloid cell accumulation.

*S. japonicum* eggs in the colorectum induce chronic colitis in exposed humans. The transition from *S. japonicum* colitis to colorectal cancer has been examined (Ming-Chai et al., 1980; Yang et al., 2023). Ming-Chai et al. (1980) described mucosal changes adjacent to large intestinal carcinoma in colectomy specimens (IARC, 1994b). In exposed humans, Yang et al. (2023) observed, by histopathological analysis, that *S. japonicum* can cause multiorgan and multisystem damage: inflammation, adenoma, and adenocarcinoma were the common lesion types. There is evidence that the diversity and composition of the human gut microbiome change during *S. japonicum* infection (Lin et al., 2022; Zhou et al., 2023a).

## Summary

Despite signals of a positive association in studies related to liver and colon cancer, these are mostly case–control or ecological; this limits inference regarding temporality or an association at the individual level. However, studies in infected humans show data for chronic inflammation, alteration of cell proliferation, and multiorgan and multisystem damage, as well as changes in the gut microbiome. There is a lack of evidence for cancer in experimental studies. Experimental studies in vivo show evidence for chronic inflammation, immunosuppression, oxidative stress, alteration of cell proliferation and cell death, and metabolic reprogramming. From the mechanistic point of view, there is evidence supporting a re-evaluation of *S. japonicum*. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *Schistosoma japonicum* (infection with) to be warranted and suggested that this agent be re-evaluated with other species of *Schistosoma*, for example with *Schistosoma mansoni* (agent 015).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 015 *Schistosoma mansoni*

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*Schistosoma mansoni* (infection with) was evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 61 in 1994 (IARC, 1994b). *S. mansoni* was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

More than 200 million people worldwide contract schistosomiasis, an infection caused by parasitic flatworms (Steinmann et al., 2006). *S. mansoni* is the most common of the schistosomes and is the predominant intestinal schistosome (Baluku et al., 2023). *S. mansoni* is a trematode that lives for years in the mesenteric veins of humans, where it produces hundreds of eggs per day. About one half of the eggs migrate to the intestinal lumen and are passed out of the body. Once in the environment, they infect snails, in which



the adult worms develop. Humans can be infected through the skin if they are exposed to water contaminated with human faeces (IARC, 1994b). Schistosomiasis is endemic in more than 70 countries but is far more prevalent in sub-Saharan countries (Chitsulo et al., 2000).

### **Cancer in humans**

Current evidence suggests that infection with *S. mansoni* eggs has oncogenic potential in the intestines or the liver in humans. Well-designed studies of cancer in humans remain scarce and there has been limited new evidence since the previous evaluation. This evidence includes two studies of liver cancer from Egypt. Hassan et al. (2001) found a higher OR for liver cancer in those with both HCV and *S. mansoni* infections (10.3; 95% CI, 1.3–79.8), compared with those infected with HCV alone (6.5; 95% CI, 1.6–26.6) but no increased OR for those infected with *S. mansoni* alone (0.2; 95% CI, 0.1–6.2). The other study (Sabry et al., 2015) did not present interpretable estimates. Hence, neither of these new studies was informative. There was, in addition, one case–control study of colorectal cancer from Zimbabwe (Katsidzira et al., 2019), which found an OR of 2.4 (95% CI, 1.4–4.2) associated with schistosome infection, although this was assumed to be with either *S. mansoni* or *Schistosoma haematobium*. Hence, the information from that study was inconclusive.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

One study in mice showed synergy between *S. mansoni* and the carcinogen diethylnitrosamine (DEN) in promoting HCC (El-Tonsy et al., 2013). In this study, small cell dysplasia arose earlier, at a higher grade, and after a smaller DEN dose in mice infected with *S. mansoni* than in uninfected mice.

In the years since the last report (IARC, 2019a), three studies have been published. A study by von Bülow et al. (2022) showed that *S. mansoni* eggs reprogramme lipid and carbohydrate metabolism (supporting KC10), resulting in oxidative stress-induced DNA damage (supporting KC1, KC2, KC3, and KC5). In particular, *S. mansoni* eggs induce the activation of ERK, c-Jun, and STAT3 in HepG2 cells stimulated with soluble egg antigens (SEAs), supporting KC10. Härle et al. (2023) showed that c-Jun plays an important role in hepatocyte proliferation and survival (KC10), further explaining their previous finding that *S. mansoni* eggs activate c-Jun via egg-secreted factors such as IL-4 inducing principle from *S. mansoni* eggs (IPSE) (Grevelding, 1995). Moreover, von Bülow et al. (2024) show that *S. mansoni* eggs trigger cellular proliferation (supporting KC10) via oxidative stress (supporting KC5), and importantly, induce proliferation, which may be abolished in human hepatoma cells by treatment with reduced glutathione (GSH). The finding that antigens secreted by *S. mansoni* eggs activate the HCC-associated transcription factors c-Jun and STAT3 in hamster and human hepatocytes (Roderfeld et al., 2020) is supported by von Bülow et al. (2022). A few other animal models also point towards mechanistic evidence in support of these and other KCs. Several reports since 2019 support chronic inflammation (KC6): Ramez et al. (2021), Takaki et al. (2021), von Bülow et al. (2022, 2024), Härle et al. (2023), and MacGregor et al. (2023). Another report supports KC7: Osada et al. (2019). There is also a publication on *S. haematobium*, in which some mechanisms are similar to those in *S. mansoni* (Mbanefo et al., 2020). Overall, there is increasing mechanistic evidence related to the KCs for *S. mansoni*. Detoni et al. (2023) measured oxidative stress in *S. mansoni* – not in the mouse host cells. Lastly, in a study by Amer et al. (2023), all infected mouse groups had smaller measured body weights than corresponding uninfected counterparts, including groups with type 1 diabetes, type 2 diabetes, and obesity; this study also found an association between infection and the induction of chronic inflammation, as have so many others (Amer et al., 2023).

## Summary

Evidence of cancer in humans is scarce, as based on few studies of little informativeness. There is some new mechanistic evidence of multiple KCs in experimental systems, but human mechanistic evidence is minimal. Overall, the evidence for cancer in experimental animals appears to be non-existent. However, based on the available mechanistic evidence, and similarities with *Schistosoma japonicum*, there is support for an evaluation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *Schistosoma mansoni* (infection with) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 016 Malaria

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Malaria (caused by infection with *Plasmodium falciparum* in holoendemic areas) was classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 104 in 2012 (IARC, 2014a), on the basis of *limited* evidence for Burkitt lymphoma in humans, together with *strong* mechanistic evidence that malaria reactivates Epstein–Barr virus, the main cause of Burkitt lymphoma. Malaria was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new data on animal carcinogenicity, mechanistic studies, and links to other cancer types to support a re-evaluation.

### Exposure characterization

Malaria in humans is caused by infection with parasites in the genus *Plasmodium* (*P. falciparum*, *P. vivax*, *P. ovale*, *P. malarie*, and *P. knowlesi*) Malarial infection is widespread in some tropical and subtropical regions of the world, particularly in sub-Saharan Africa. The range and severity of infection may be increasing, owing to the effects of climate change (Leal Filho et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 104 (IARC, 2014a), the evidence for human cancer was found to be *limited*, as it was based largely on ecological studies linking Burkitt lymphoma geographically to locations of high malaria prevalence in children. Several case–control studies had serious limitations, particularly in relation to the choice of biological, clinical, and behavioural indicators of past malaria exposure. Since then, there have been further ecological and case–control studies on Burkitt lymphoma in African countries, as well as a systematic review and meta-analysis of its association with malaria. There have also been further investigations of the role of malaria in the etiology of Kaposi sarcoma.

Since *IARC Monographs* Volume 104 (IARC, 2014a), findings from case–control studies of Burkitt lymphoma continue to be mixed. For example, in the largest study of Burkitt lymphoma available, Peprah et al. (2020) found that, across three malaria-endemic countries (Kenya, Uganda, the United Republic of Tanzania), some malaria markers were associated with an increased risk, while others were associated with a lower risk. Redmond et al. (2020) analysed data from the same study combined with data published in other reports for African countries and concluded that, contrary to previous hypotheses, Burkitt lymphoma is more closely related to asymptomatic malaria than to malaria with a high parasite burden and clinical symptoms. A meta-analysis (Kotepui and Kotepui, 2021) found no evidence, overall, for an association between malaria and Burkitt lymphoma, based on all published case–control studies. A new geographical analysis (Broen et al., 2023), also drawing on a three-country dataset of Burkitt lymphoma cases, found a strong geographical correlation between incidence rates and the estimated cumulative number of malaria infections per child. For Kaposi sarcoma, several reports suggest that malaria is related to the prevalence,

transmission, and reactivation of its causative agent, the Kaposi sarcoma-associated herpesvirus (KSHV). However, there does not appear to be a study that has directly investigated the relation between malaria and the occurrence of Kaposi sarcoma.

Exposure assessment continues to be the main barrier to conducting definitive studies of the relation between malaria and both Burkitt lymphoma and Kaposi sarcoma. As both these types of cancer are rare, even in endemic settings, prospective cohorts would need to be infeasibly large, so there has been a reliance on case–control and ecological studies, with their inherent limitations in exposure assessment. A further complexity in these studies is the need to take careful account of the herpesviruses, EBV, the recognized primary cause of Burkitt lymphoma, and KSHV, the recognized primary cause of Kaposi sarcoma, as malaria's role as a carcinogen is considered to operate synergistically with these infections.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

In the previous evaluation, there was *strong* mechanistic evidence, including findings that *Plasmodium falciparum* reactivates latent infection with EBV, a recognized cause of Burkitt lymphoma. There is extensive literature on the pathogenic processes induced by *P. falciparum* infection, including mechanisms that are plausibly related to enhancing the carcinogenic potential of the two herpesviruses through reactivation and other means.

### **Summary**

While there has been a substantial body of new evidence on the role of malaria in the pathogenesis of Burkitt lymphoma and Kaposi sarcoma, and their respective causal herpesviruses, the direct epidemiological evidence for malaria in cancer causation remains mixed. For Burkitt lymphoma, a Working Group would need to rely largely on the ecological studies to consider changing the evaluation of the evidence for human carcinogenicity to *sufficient*. For Kaposi sarcoma, the direct epidemiological evidence for causation by malaria would probably still be viewed as *inadequate*, but mechanistic evidence related to KSHV reactivation may be relevant to Working Group deliberations. Overall, it would make sense to postpone further consideration by the *IARC Monographs* programme until there are stronger human cancer data. Evidence for Burkitt lymphoma is still largely ecological, with mixed findings in case–control studies. There is some evidence for association with KSHV but not Kaposi sarcoma. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of malaria is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **017 Gene or cell therapy or vectors**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Gene or cell therapy or vectors have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Gene therapy is a technique that modifies a person's genes to treat or cure disease. Gene therapies use several mechanisms: (i) replacing a disease-causing gene with a healthy copy of the gene; (ii) inactivating a disease-causing gene that is not functioning properly; or (iii) introducing a new or modified gene into the body to help treat a disease. There are different types of gene therapy product. Plasmids are circular DNA molecules that can be genetically engineered to carry therapeutic genes into human cells. Viral vectors are

viruses that have been modified to remove their ability to cause infectious disease. Because viruses have a natural ability to deliver genetic material into cells, these modified viruses can be used as vectors (vehicles) to carry therapeutic genes into human cells. Bacterial vectors can be produced by modifying bacteria to prevent them from causing infectious disease and then used as vectors (vehicles) to transport therapeutic genes into human tissues. Human gene editing technology can be used to disrupt harmful genes or to repair mutated genes. Patient-derived cellular gene therapy products are obtained by removing and genetically modifying them (often using a viral vector) cells from the patient and are then reintroduced in the patient (US FDA, 2018). The most important vector platforms of the past 20 years are adeno-associated viruses (AAVs), adenoviruses (AdVs), and lentiviruses (LVs) (Minskaia et al., 2023). Successful clinical studies have led to the approval of six AAV-based and three LV-based gene therapies. The AAV-based therapies are alipogene tiparvovec, approved in the EU in 2012 for the treatment of lipoprotein lipase deficiency (European Medicines Agency, 2012); voretigene neparvovec, approved by the US Food and Drug Administration (US FDA) in 2017 for the treatment of retinal dystrophy (US FDA, 2017); onasemnogene abeparvovec, approved in the EU in 2020 for the treatment of babies and young children with spinal muscular atrophy (European Medicines Agency, 2020a); eladocogene exuparvovec, approved in 2022 for the treatment of severe aromatic L-amino acid decarboxylase (AADC) deficiency (European Medicines Agency, 2022a); valoctocogene roxaparvovec, for the treatment of severe haemophilia A in adults; and etranacogene dezaparvovec, for the treatment of haemophilia B in adults (European Medicines Agency, 2022b). The LV-based therapies are atidarsagene autotemcel, for the treatment of infantile metachromatic leukodystrophy (MLD) (European Medicines Agency, 2020b); betibeglogene autotemcel, for the treatment of  $\beta$ -thalassemia; and elivaldogene autotemcel, for the treatment of children with cerebral adrenoleukodystrophy (ALD) (European Medicines Agency, 2021). The US FDA approved five new gene therapies in 2023 (Senior, 2022).

### **Cancer in humans**

Cancer as a side-effect of gene therapy was recognized in early clinical trials (Rothe et al., 2014). Safety monitoring of clinical trials and post-marketing pharmacovigilance studies have reported cases of cancer (particularly acute myeloid leukaemia, AML) after gene therapy (Rafaniello et al., 2020; Kanter et al., 2023). Continued safety monitoring of trials and long-term cohort studies of cancer risks among patients who have received gene therapy should provide relevant data; however, such studies, which could be the basis of an *IARC Monographs* evaluation, have not been identified.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals for genetic vectors, cell therapy, or gene therapy were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

No study was identified regarding mechanistic evidence for genetic vectors, cell therapy, or gene therapy. Insertional mutagenesis, where the vector integrates in human DNA at a site close to a proto-oncogene, is a classic mechanism of viral carcinogenesis in animals. Genomic insertion of a viral vector may reduce expression of proximal tumour suppressor genes or activate proximal proto-oncogenes within the host. In animal models, integration of AAV into the host genome may cause HCC (Sabatino et al., 2022). In humans, retroviral gene therapy targeting severe combined immunodeficiency (SCID) was found to lead to T-cell leukaemia (Kohn et al., 2003). But at that time, only one mouse model was reported to progress towards AML after the insertion of retrovirally transduced bone marrow cells near the cellular proto-oncogene ecotropic viral integration site 1 (Evi1) (Li et al., 2002). It was not, therefore, clear in the study of Kohn et al. (2003) whether insertional mutagenesis or the properties of the cells of patients, their

immunodeficiency, or the transgene they were receiving through therapy was causative of leukaemia. More recently, in two patients who had undergone gene therapy for sickle cell disease and developed myeloid malignancies, stem cell mutations were found in *DNMT3A* and *EZH2* genes associated with accelerated growth (Spencer Chapman et al., 2023). In gene therapies targeting cancer – the majority of gene therapy trials from 1989 through 2015 (Hanna et al., 2017) – patient factors may have induced a predisposition to cancer. Importantly, today’s technologies increasingly use directed approaches in what are thought to be safer regions of the genome (Naldini, 2015). Multipotent stromal cells used in cell-based therapies may play a role in the progression of carcinogenesis through spontaneous transformation or may modulate tumour growth and metastasis (Lazennec and Jorgensen, 2008), but more research is required. Overall, the occurrence of cancer in patients receiving cell or gene therapies targeting cancer and non-cancer diseases is diminishing: in 33 clinical holds from 2020 to 2022, only five may be related to cancer-related events: three for CAR-T cells; one for LV; one for AAV; and none for any others (Wills et al., 2023). Moreover, vector design is improving, and regulatory bodies, such as the US FDA (2020) and concerned scientists (Anonymous, 2021) are calling for long-term follow-up for new malignancies, especially for AAVs, herpes viruses, gammaretroviruses, LVs, transposon elements, microbial vectors, and genome editing products (see US FDA, 2020, Table 1). No data from human primary cells or tissues or from experimental systems were available regarding any of the 10 KCs.

### Summary

Gene therapies are evolving rapidly, with a growing proportion of the population undergoing gene therapy and therefore becoming exposed. Safety monitoring of clinical trials has found that cancer can be an adverse event of gene therapy with first-generation vectors. Limited evidence available suggests that cancer may be an adverse outcome with second-generation vectors. Continued safety monitoring of trials and long-term cohort studies of cancer risks among patients who have received gene therapy seem warranted. No prospective cohort studies have been identified that could form the basis for a systematic review by the *IARC Monographs* at this time.

Overall, there is a lack of data on cancer in experimental animals. The data regarding mechanistic evidence appear to be minimally informative because the raw data are usually not available and the adequacy of the design, certainly in cancer-targeting therapies, does not allow the untangling of cause and consequence. It appears unlikely that evidence for or against carcinogenicity in humans would be revealed. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of gene or cell therapy or vectors is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 018 Aflatoxins (CAS No. 1402-68-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Aflatoxins have been evaluated repeatedly by the *IARC Monographs* programme and were classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100F in 2009 (IARC, 2012b). There is *sufficient* evidence that aflatoxins cause liver cancer (specifically, HCC) in humans. Aflatoxins were given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of emerging epidemiological evidence from case–control studies (described in this report) that they may cause cancer of gall bladder in humans. The Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives (JECFA) conducted a risk assessment of aflatoxins in food most recently in 2016 and calculated a maximum limit (FAO/WHO, 2016).

## Exposure characterization

As described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100F (IARC, 2012b) and the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), aflatoxins are naturally occurring contaminants of food crops that cause globally widespread health threats and economic burdens. Aflatoxins, as part of a broader group of mycotoxins, are mainly produced by two species of fungi: *Aspergillus flavus* and *Aspergillus parasiticus*. Aflatoxins can flourish in crops grown in moist warm conditions frequently experienced in tropical or subtropical locations, either before or after harvesting (e.g. during transit and storage). Major crops affected include maize, cottonseed, peanuts, tree nuts, coffee, rice, wheat, sorghum, and spices (e.g. Sadeh et al., 2023). Efforts continue to reduce exposure to these carcinogenic mycotoxins. For example, JECFA recently established new maximum levels for aflatoxins in grains and cereals, including those typically consumed by children (FAO/WHO, 2022). JECFA estimated that, with the exception of very high estimates of dietary exposure to aflatoxins for some African countries (105–850 ng/kg bw (body weight) per day), all mean dietary aflatoxin exposures were in the range < 0.01–58 ng/kg bw per day with high consumer estimates in the range < 0.01–200 ng/kg bw per day (FAO/WHO, 2018). With increasing global temperatures from climate change, aflatoxin hazards have been extending northward within Europe (Battilani et al., 2016).

## Cancer in humans

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), two case–control studies observed an association between aflatoxins and cancer of the gall bladder, one in Chile (Nogueira et al., 2015) and the Shanghai Biliary Tract Cancer study in China (Koshiol et al., 2017). In both of these studies, exposure was measured after the cancer diagnosis, giving rise to concern about reverse causation (i.e. the cancer diagnosis affecting the levels of the aflatoxin analyte through change of diet) and whether the exposure measurement captured the relevant window of susceptibility to cancer induction, leading to concerns about exposure misclassification. Since then, a nested case–control study from the Shanghai Cohort Study in China has observed an association between aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub>-lysine albumin adducts measured prospectively (at baseline) and subsequent incidence of gall bladder cancer (Koshiol et al., 2024). The risk of gall bladder cancer was twice as high for those with the adducts at baseline, compared with those without (OR, 2.0; 95% CI, 1.0–3.9), providing the first temporal evidence of exposure preceding the cancer outcome. Furthermore, some evidence was found of an exposure–response trend between quantitative measures of aflatoxin adduct formation and risk of gall bladder cancer ( $P = 0.05$ ), and a higher risk of gall bladder cancer was seen among participants with detectable adduct formation who had gallstones.

## Mechanistic evidence

As described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100F, there is *strong* evidence that aflatoxins operate through a genotoxic mechanism involving metabolic activation to a genotoxic epoxide and subsequent formation of DNA adducts. There is evidence that aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub> becomes concentrated in the biliary tree and causes cellular proliferation, including in exposed humans (Harland and Cardeilhac, 1975; Krishnamachari et al., 1975). Highly clonal mutational signatures of aflatoxin exposure in gall bladder tumours have also been reported (e.g. Nepal et al., 2021; Kang et al., 2022b).

## Summary

The epidemiological evidence from the prospective cohort study reinforces the findings from the two previous case–control studies, which, together with the mechanistic evidence, suggests that there may now be *limited* or *sufficient* evidence that aflatoxins cause cancer of the gall bladder in humans. New, potentially informative, studies in areas with high aflatoxin exposure are currently underway. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of aflatoxins to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 019 $\alpha$ -Pinene (CAS No. 7785-26-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

$\alpha$ -Pinene has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

$\alpha$ -Pinene is a natural compound produced by pine trees and other plants, including *Cannabis* species (Allenspach and Steuer, 2021; ECHA, 2023c). It is extensively used as a fragrance and flavour ingredient. Notably used in the manufacture of turpentine, its annual production and importation in the European Economic Area fall within the range 10 000–100 000 tonnes. Its predominant consumer uses include incorporation in household cleaning products, air care products, cosmetics, and flavoured foods (Waidyanatha et al., 2022; ECHA, 2023c). Exposure to  $\alpha$ -pinene primarily occurs through these consumer and lifestyle-related products and in professional settings. Additionally, its presence as a common indoor air pollutant is attributed to its inclusion in long-life materials, such as construction and building materials. Despite  $\alpha$ -pinene being a widespread compound, exposure levels in typical indoor environments are generally low, but can be significantly higher in occupational settings, such as the lumber and furniture industry (Hagström et al., 2012; Allenspach and Steuer, 2021; Waidyanatha et al., 2022; ECHA, 2023c).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies on carcinogenicity of  $\alpha$ -pinene in chronic experiments on animal were available to the Advisory Group. The Advisory Group was aware of a 2-year bioassay on the carcinogenicity of  $\alpha$ -pinene administered by inhalation to F344/N rats and B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice, in preparation by the National Toxicology Program (NTP).

### Mechanistic evidence

$\alpha$ -Pinene induced significant inhibition of gap junctions (half maximal inhibitory concentration, IC<sub>50</sub>), 12  $\mu$ M) in a rat Novikoff hepatoma cell line (Mickus et al., 2021) and influenced the ERK/Akt pathway in NK cells, including cytotoxicity (Jo et al., 2021).

$\alpha$ -Pinene induced DNA damage in melanoma cells; this was assessed using phosphorylated H2A histone family member X ( $\gamma$ -H2AX), a biomarker for DNA double-stranded breaks (KC1, KC2, KC3). However,  $\alpha$ -pinene did not influence 8-hydroxy-2'-deoxyguanosine (8-OHdG) concentrations and did not induce micronuclei and chromosome aberrations in cultured human blood cells (Türkez and Aydın, 2016).  $\alpha$ -Pinene did not induce DNA damage, as assessed by the comet assay in human A549 lung adenocarcinoma cells in a system that allowed exposure to  $\alpha$ -pinene in air (Gminski et al., 2010). In addition,  $\alpha$ -pinene was not mutagenic at a single concentration of 3  $\mu$ M in *Salmonella typhimurium* strains TA98, TA100, TA1535, and TA1537, with or without metabolic activation from Aroclor 1254-induced rat liver S9 (9000  $\times$  g supernatant) microsomes, and in strains TA98 and TA100, with or without 3-methylcholanthrene-induced rat liver S9 mix (Florin et al., 1980). Additionally,  $\alpha$ -pinene gave negative results in *S. typhimurium* strains TA98 and TA100 when tested at concentrations ranging from 10 to 500  $\mu$ g/plate with or without S9 mix (Connor et al., 1985) and enantiomers of  $\alpha$ -pinene gave negative results in *S. typhimurium* strains TA97a, TA98, TA100, and TA1535 at concentrations ranging from 100–5000  $\mu$ g/plate with or without S9 mix (Gomes-Carneiro et al., 2005). No increase in micronucleated erythrocytes was seen in male or female mice in the 3-month short-term NTP study (NTP, 2016d). A recent safety assessment concluded that  $\alpha$ -pinene is

not genotoxic (Api et al., 2022).  $\alpha$ -Pinene is metabolized into  $\alpha$ -pinene oxide, which is a genotoxic metabolite (Waidyanatha et al., 2022).

$\alpha$ -Pinene induced mitochondrial dysfunction and ROS accumulation in the murine T-lymphoma cell line EL-4 (Abe et al., 2024) (KC5). However, in cultured human blood cells,  $\alpha$ -pinene caused significant increases in total oxidant capacity, while total oxidative stress was influenced only at high concentrations, suggesting that  $\alpha$ -pinene acts as an antioxidant (Türkez and Aydın, 2016), while antioxidant effects were previously shown in different cultured cells in vitro (Wang et al., 2008; Karthikeyan et al., 2018).

$\alpha$ -Pinene induces cell cycle arrest in experimental systems in vitro (Xu et al., 2018), reduced tumour cell proliferation, and induced apoptosis in xenograft tumours (Zhao et al., 2018). Moreover, it is followed by wide transcriptome changes associated with the ROS pathway and apoptosis (KC10); in particular, it increased early growth response 1 (*EGR1*) gene expression (KC8) that followed with upregulation of p53, a central mediator of cell cycle arrest and apoptosis (Abe et al., 2024). Several studies demonstrated the pro-apoptotic effect of  $\alpha$ -pinene in human cultured cells (Santana et al., 2012; Chen et al., 2014b, 2015; Zhang et al., 2015; Spyridopoulou et al., 2017; Zhao et al., 2018; Hou et al., 2019; Huang et al., 2022a; Abe et al., 2024).

At concentrations ranging from 25 to 35  $\mu$ M in cell culture medium,  $\alpha$ -pinene was clastogenic in V79-C13 Chinese hamster (Catanzaro et al., 2012). Clastogenic activity corresponds to DNA damage assessed by the comet assay, significant increases in micronucleated cells, and induction of chromosomal breakage, as assessed by metaphase analysis (Catanzaro et al., 2012).

Under the conditions of a 3-month inhalation study in male and female rats and mice,  $\alpha$ -pinene increased the incidence of transitional epithelium hyperplasia of the urinary bladder, in both sexes (NTP, 2016d).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans are available.  $\alpha$ -Pinene influences oxidative stress regulation without any significant DNA damage in most experimental systems. Moreover, its influence may cause antiproliferative and pro-apoptotic effects in some experimental systems, and it may also have antioxidant effects. There appear to be numerous studies pertinent to mechanistic evidence; however, they appear to have inconsistent findings, especially for KC1, KC2, and KC3. The mechanistic evidence does not support an evaluation of carcinogenicity of  $\alpha$ -pinene. A 2-year bioassay on the carcinogenicity of  $\alpha$ -pinene administered by inhalation to F344/N rats and B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice is in preparation by the NTP. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of  $\alpha$ -pinene to be warranted if supported by these bioassay findings.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 020 Black cohosh extracts (*Actaea racemosa*) (CAS No. 84776-26-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Black cohosh extracts (BCEs, *Actaea racemosa*) have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

BCEs are derived from the root of *Actaea racemosa* (syn. *Cimicifuga racemosa*), which is a prominent botanical dietary supplement or herbal medicinal product, used particularly in the USA, where it ranked among the top 10 bestselling botanicals. It is traditionally used for various female gynaecological conditions, including premenstrual syndrome (PMS), menopausal symptoms, and labour stimulation (Bernacki et al., 2019; NTP, 2023c).



*Actaea racemosa* is a North American native woodland herb. Historically, it has been used by indigenous populations in America and later also in Europe to treat gynaecological conditions, and it was introduced to the US medical community in the mid-19th century to treat a range of conditions, including ovarian, uterine, and menstrual disorders, as well as to enhance breast milk production (Anonymous, 2003; EMA, 2018).

Black cohosh preparations are usually obtained by dissolving plant material in a solvent, such as ethanol, to form a liquid extract, which is then dried. These are typically available in solid forms for oral dosage and may also be found in combination with other herbal substances. Specific herbal preparations are authorized in Europe for the relief of menopausal symptoms, and in the United Kingdom (UK) for rheumatic pain relief. BCE include 131 bioactive compounds (Salari et al., 2021) and is generally standardized to the content of triterpene glycosides (Jiang et al., 2006). *European Pharmacopoeia* defines BCE as containing a minimum of 1.0% triterpene glycosides (Council of Europe, 2022). Despite their wide use, there is limited scientific evidence to support the efficacy of black cohosh for many of these applications (EMA, 2018).

Commercial products showed wide variations in triterpene glycoside content (0.36–7.55%,  $n = 11$ ) (Jiang et al., 2006). A key problem in evaluating BCE effects is the limited information on the type, amount, quality, and content of the products used in any study.

### **Cancer in humans**

A cohort study (VITAL, VITamins And Lifestyle) in Washington state, USA, among 35 016 postmenopausal women, aged 50–76 years, with 5–7 years follow-up, found a HR of 1.17 (95% CI, 0.75–1.82) between black cohosh and breast cancer (Brasky et al., 2010). A systematic review of the link between black cohosh and breast cancer included two additional case–control studies, detecting no association between black cohosh and risk of breast cancer (Fritz et al., 2014), whereas the two included case–control studies reported significant inverse associations among postmenopausal women for primary (Rebbeck et al., 2007) and invasive (Obi et al., 2009) breast cancer related to black cohosh exposure, with an adjusted OR of 0.39 (95% CI, 0.22–0.70) for the former and an OR of 0.74 (95% CI, 0.63–0.87) for the latter. An observational retrospective cohort included in the review also showed a protective effect for isopropanolic black cohosh extract and a risk of breast cancer recurrence (adjusted HR, 0.75; 95% CI, 0.63–0.89) (Henneicke-von Zepelin et al., 2007).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Two long-term bioassays (gavage) have been conducted in mice (2 years with 12 months interim) and rats (2-year perinatal phase with 2-year post weaning phase) in (NTP, 2023c). There was a marginal increase in the incidence of rare uterine squamous cell papilloma in the mid-dose female rat group that was considered to be equivocal evidence by the NTP, and the incidence of squamous metaplasia of the uterus was significantly increased in the high-dose female group. There was no evidence of carcinogenic activity of perinatal BCE exposure in male rats at all maternal doses tested. There was no evidence of carcinogenic activity of BCE in female mice at all doses tested.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

BCE genotoxicity was shown in an in vitro flow-cytometric micronucleus assay using human B-lymphoblastoid TK6 cells (Smith-Roe et al., 2018). Dose-dependent increases in micronuclei in TK6 cells were observed over a range of 30–500 µg/mL BCE for 4 hours or 10–125 µg/mL for 24 hours in the absence of rat liver S9 mix. Micronuclei induction in TK6 cells by BCE is caused by an aneugenic (whole chromosome loss) versus a clastogenic (chromosome breakage) mode of action. Using a multiflow aneugen molecular mechanism assay, BCE was shown to destabilize microtubules (Bernacki et al., 2019). TK6 cells exposed to 25–250 µg/mL BCE demonstrated DNA damage at 0.5, 1, 2, 4, and 24 hours after exposure using

micronuclei assay (Seo et al., 2021). In addition, the same study revealed DNA damage by comet assay. Tail DNA portion was significantly increased at 0.5, 1, 2, and 4 hours when cells were exposed to 250 µg/mL BCE but was not detected in human hepatoblastoma HepG2 cells. Moreover, phosphorylation of γ-H2AX, as a biomarker for DNA breaks, was observed in TK6 cells after 4 and 24 hours of exposure to BCE (Seo et al., 2021).

Several BCEs of different suppliers were tested for genotoxicity in *S. typhimurium* strains TA100 and TA98 and *Escherichia coli* strain WP2 *uvrA* (pKM101) at doses ranging from 100 to 10 000 µg/plate, with or without 10% induced rat liver S9 mix, and the result was equivocal for only one BCE product in TA98 in the presence of S9 mix and negative in other strains (Smith-Roe et al., 2018). Negative results were observed using the same strains for other BCE products at doses ranging from 187.5 to 6000 µg/plate, with or without activation by rat liver S9 mix (NTP, 2023c).

BCE and actein were shown to induce ROS accumulation in human bladder cancer cell lines BIU-87 and T24 and to induce dose-dependent apoptosis (Ji et al., 2017). Both BCE and actein increased ROS production in human TK6 cells, followed by DNA double-strand breaks; this was revealed by detection of γ-H2AX and resulted in chromosomal damage, as measured by an increased percentage of micronuclei in cells (Le et al., 2022a). At the same time, actein protects against methylglyoxal-induced oxidative damage in murine osteoblastic MC3T3-E1 cells (Suh et al., 2017).

BCE does not appear to cause gene mutations, as assessed in bacterial mutagenicity assays.

BCE increased micronucleated reticulocytes and micronucleated erythrocytes in the peripheral blood of female B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice at doses ranging from 62.5 to 1000 mg/kg per day via gavage for 13 weeks (Mercado-Feliciano et al., 2012). Significant increases in micronucleated reticulocytes were also observed in the peripheral blood of female Wistar Han rats treated with doses ranging from 15 to 1000 mg/kg per day for 13 weeks via gavage (Mercado-Feliciano et al., 2012). A significant increase in micronuclei frequency was caused in peripheral blood from female B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice by administration of BCE at 1000 mg/kg per day for 13 weeks by gavage (Cora et al., 2017).

BCE inhibited LNCaP (lymph node carcinoma of the prostate) cell xenograft development in immunodeficient nu/nu mice (Seidlová-Wuttke et al., 2006). BCE significantly potentiated anticancer activity of doxorubicin against MCF-7 xenografts (Płoska et al., 2023).

The estrogenic effects of BCEs are controversial, and the more recent data indicate that there may be an anti-estrogenic activity (Mahady et al., 2002). BCE and actein, one of the main BCE triterpene glycosides, strongly stimulated androgen formation in breast cancer cells in vitro (Poschner et al., 2020).

## Summary

Sparse epidemiological data show either null or inverse associations between BCEs and cancer in humans (e.g. for primary breast cancer among postmenopausal women). Equivocal evidence of carcinogenicity in female rats was demonstrated by the high incidence of squamous metaplasia of the uterus in a high-dose group. Moreover, BCEs increased the numbers of pulmonary metastases of mammary tumours in mice. There is substantial evidence that BCEs exhibit KCs in experimental systems. Therefore, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of BCEs (*Actaea racemosa*) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 021 Fumonisin B<sub>1</sub> (CAS No. 116355-83-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Fumonisin B<sub>1</sub> (FB<sub>1</sub>) was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 82 in 2002 (IARC, 2002a), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in animals and *inadequate* evidence for cancer in humans. JECFA conducted a risk assessment of FB<sub>1</sub> in food most recently in 2016, and the previously established group provisional maximum tolerable daily intake (PMTDI) of 2 µg/kg bw for fumonisin B<sub>1</sub>, B<sub>2</sub>, and B<sub>3</sub>, alone or in combination, was retained (FAO/WHO, 2016).

FB<sub>1</sub> was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a) on the basis of mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

FB<sub>1</sub> is the most prevalent member of a family of toxins, known as fumonisins, produced by several species of *Fusarium* moulds, which commonly colonize different cereals, particularly maize, sorghum, and wheat (Cendoya et al., 2018; Knutsen et al., 2018). Climate change is expected to alter the geographical distribution and growth conditions of these fungi, which in turn might change exposure patterns and increase human exposure to FB<sub>1</sub> (Perrone et al., 2020).

The general population is currently exposed by the oral route, by the ingestion of contaminated foods. FB<sub>1</sub> was found in the urine of exclusively breastfed infants, suggesting that human breast milk can also be an important source of exposure in young children (Njumbe Ediage et al., 2013). Additional exposure routes include inhalation and dermal absorption, which can be particularly relevant in the case of occupational exposure (Viegas et al., 2018; Alvito et al., 2022). Activities implying high exposure to organic dust, such as storage work, loading, handling, or milling contaminated materials (grain, waste, and feed), and other activities, such as caring for animals in animal husbandry settings or waste management tasks, will result in acute exposure to FB<sub>1</sub> by inhalation (Viegas et al., 2018).

In human biomonitoring studies, FB<sub>1</sub> has been detected in urine of the general population from different countries from Europe, South America, and Asia (Afsah-Hejri et al., 2013; Cendoya et al., 2018; Sabbioni et al., 2022).

### Cancer in humans

As described in the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation, epidemiological studies conducted in South Africa and China revealed some evidence of an association between the intake of FB<sub>1</sub> and increased incidence of oesophageal cancer (Marasas et al., 1979, 1981, 1988; Rheeder et al., 1992; IARC, 1993a; Chu and Li, 1994; Yoshizawa et al., 1994; Wang et al., 2000; Sun et al., 2007). Similar studies conducted in Italy did not find an association between the intake of FB<sub>1</sub> and oesophageal cancer incidence (Logrieco et al., 1995; WHO, 2000).

### Cancer in experimental animals

The previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation established *sufficient evidence* in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of FB<sub>1</sub> (IARC, 2002a). Since then, an additional feed study using male p53 heterozygous (Trp53<sup>+/-</sup>) and p53 homozygous (Trp53<sup>+/+</sup>) transgenic mice has been published. Hepatic adenomas and cholangiomas were observed at the highest dose; a low incidence of cholangioma and hepatocellular adenoma was observed in both strains. The similarity in response in both strains supports the notion that the carcinogenicity of FB<sub>1</sub> is due to a non-genotoxic mode of action (Bondy et al., 2012).

### Mechanistic evidence

There is little evidence that FB<sub>1</sub> or its metabolites form DNA adducts (IARC, 2002a). FB<sub>1</sub> showed negative results in bacterial mutagenesis assays but induced DNA damage in vitro and in vivo, probably due

to oxidative stress (Chen et al., 2021a). Genotoxicity was described in human leukocytes (Kaminski et al., 2020; Miguel Alfonso et al., 2022). FB<sub>1</sub> induced epigenetic alterations, including DNA methylation and histone modifications in human or non-human mammalian cell lines or in vivo (Zhu et al., 2021a). Oxidative stress was increased by FB<sub>1</sub> in human umbilical vein endothelial cells (Zhao et al., 2020a) and in human or rodent cell lines (Chen et al., 2021a). Oxidative stress caused by FB<sub>1</sub> induced apoptosis and cellular autophagy in experimental systems (Khan et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018a; Li et al., 2021c). This FB<sub>1</sub>-induced immunotoxicity mechanism is mainly involved in oxidative stress. FB<sub>1</sub> usually plays an anti-inflammatory (immunosuppressive) role when stimulatory factors are present and a proinflammatory (immunostimulatory) role when these stimulatory factors are absent (Sun et al., 2022a); this was observed in primary human peripheral blood-derived dendritic cells (Stockmann-Juvala et al., 2008) and in rats (Tryphonas et al., 1997). FB<sub>1</sub> can promote cell proliferation in human oesophageal epithelial cells (Yu et al., 2021c) and in normal human liver cells (Wang et al., 2013).

In addition, FB<sub>1</sub> is a strong inhibitor of ceramide synthase, causing a disruption in sphingolipid metabolism and an accumulation of sphinganine and sphingosine, which seem to induce apoptosis in rodent renal tubule cells and hepatocytes (Voss et al., 2001; Riley and Merrill, 2019). FB<sub>1</sub>-induced kidney and liver toxicity in animal models could be linked with the inhibition of ceramide synthase through a series of events: increased mRNA expression of genes modulating apoptosis; increased expression of TNF $\alpha$ ; increased expression of genes involved in mitosis or regulating cell cycle progression; oxidative stress and secondary damage to macromolecules; altered lipid biosynthesis; and altered lipid composition in cell membranes (Voss and Riley, 2013). Importantly, inhibition of ceramide synthase was detected in people in Guatemala who consumed corn-based foods with a high content of FB<sub>1</sub> (Riley et al., 2015). Inhabitants of Guatemala also have a high incidence of liver cancer, although this is confounded by the presence of aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub> (Torres et al., 2015). In addition, JECFA concluded that “daily exposure to high levels of FB<sub>1</sub> is likely to result in inhibition of ceramide synthase in humans, similar to what has been described in many animal studies” (FAO/WHO, 2017).

## Summary

Since the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation, only one new human cancer study has become available, and the human cancer evidence remains equivocal. There is already *sufficient* evidence that FB<sub>1</sub> causes tumours in experimental animals. There is substantial new mechanistic evidence relative to several KCs in experimental systems and some evidence in human primary cells. Some studies are available in studies in exposed humans, although there are concerns on potential confounding co-exposure to aflatoxin B<sub>1</sub>. On the basis of current mechanistic information, a re-evaluation of the agent could support a change in the classification of the agent. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of fumonisin B<sub>1</sub> to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 022 Patulin (CAS No. 149-29-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Patulin has been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). JECFA conducted a risk assessment of patulin in food (FAO/WHO, 1995a) and calculated a provisional tolerable weekly intake (PTWI) of 7  $\mu\text{g/kg bw/day}$ .

## Exposure characterization

Patulin is a polyketide mycotoxin primarily associated with mouldy fruits, with human exposure mainly occurring through food consumption. It is produced by various species of fungi, including several species of *Penicillium*, *Aspergillus*, and *Byssoschlamys*. Patulin has been detected in mouldy fruits and vegetables (e.g. apples, peaches, pears, tomatoes, apricots, bananas, pineapples, grapes, strawberries, melons, paprika, cucumbers, carrots). However, it is not found in unspoiled fruit. Processed fruit and vegetable products can contain patulin. Globally, patulin is one of several mycotoxins whose levels in food are regulated (IARC, 1986; Puel et al., 2010). The European Commission (2006) set maximum levels of 25 µg/kg for solid apple products and 10.0 µg/kg for apple juice or solid apple products intended for infants and young children.

## Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

## Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of patulin. Since that evaluation, some studies have been published.

Patulin is able to initiate carcinogenesis in mouse skin. One single topical application of 400 nmol of patulin in mouse skin followed by twice weekly application of 12-tetradecanoyl-phorbol-myristate-acetate (4 nmol per 0.1 mL of acetone) after a week of initiation was able to induce the formation of SCC after 14 weeks. However, no tumours were observed when patulin was used for 25 weeks, either as a complete carcinogen (80 nmol) or as a tumour promoter (20 nmol and 40 nmol) (Saxena et al., 2011).

The few studies of long-term toxicity on patulin showed an absence of tumours in rats treated orally for 74–104 weeks (Osswald et al., 1978; Becci et al., 1981). These studies were considered in the previous evaluation of patulin by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) (IARC, 1986).

## Mechanistic evidence

Patulin has a strong affinity for sulfhydryl (SH) groups; this explains its inhibition of many enzymes (Puel et al., 2010). Patulin adducts formed with cysteine are less toxic than the unmodified compound in acute toxicity, teratogenicity, and mutagenicity studies.

Patulin is hepatotoxic to animals; this toxicity is related to its ability to react with SH groups and to induce oxidative damage (increased ROS levels, decreased GSH levels, increased SOD and catalase activity and increased levels of thiobarbituric acid-reactive substances, TBARS, in the liver) (Puel et al., 2010; Song et al., 2014a; Janik et al., 2020). Patulin induces apoptosis in human colon carcinoma (HCT116) and embryonic kidney cells (HEK293) through a ROS-dependent mechanism involving estrogen receptor (ER) stress and activation of the mitochondrial apoptotic pathway (Boussabbeh et al., 2015).

In vivo studies in mice indicate variable effects of patulin on the immune system. Patulin treatment increased the number of splenic T lymphocytes and depressed serum immunoglobulin concentrations in mice and rabbits (Escoula et al., 1988a), and increased neutrophil numbers and resistance to *Candida albicans* infection (Escoula et al., 1988b). In female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice treated orally for 28 days, patulin was not able to alter the cell-mediated or humoral response (Llewellyn et al., 1998).

A single topical application of patulin showed enhanced cell proliferation (approximately twofold), along with increased generation of ROS and activation of ERK-, p38-, and c-Jun related MAPKs, in mouse skin. Patulin exposure also showed activation of downstream target proteins, c-fos, c-Jun, and NF-κB transcription factors, along with a significant increase of lipid peroxidation and a decrease in the activities of free sulfhydryls, catalase, SOD, and GSH reductase activities (Saxena et al., 2011).

Patulin was found to reduce the cytokine secretion of IFN $\gamma$  and IL-4 by human macrophages (Wichmann et al., 2002) and that of IL-4, IL-13, IFN $\gamma$ , and IL-10 by human PBMCs and human T cells (Luft et al., 2008). This decrease in cytokine secretion was due not to the cytotoxic effects of patulin but to the depletion of intracellular GSH (Luft et al., 2008).

Patulin induced a reduction in the production of IL-2 and IL-5 in thymoma cell line EL-4 treated with patulin (Marin et al., 1996).

Data on genotoxicity were variable; most assays carried out with mammalian cells were positive while assays in bacteria were mainly negative. In addition, some studies indicated that patulin impaired DNA synthesis (Puel et al., 2010).

Patulin treatment induced a significant increase in micronuclei in polychromatic erythrocytes (PCE) and micronuclei in normochromatic erythrocytes (NCE) in male Kunming mouse bone marrow cells (Song et al., 2014a).

Patulin induced chromosomal aberrations in both gaps and breaks and induced a significant increase in chromosomal gaps and breaks in mouse bone marrow cells (Song et al., 2014a).

Patulin induces DNA damage, as measured by the comet assay in the brain, liver, and kidneys in a dose-dependent manner and over a broad dose range (1.0–3.75 mg/kg bw) in male CF-1 mice aged 9 weeks; this is associated with decreased GSH content and increased lipid peroxidation (de Melo et al., 2012).

JECFA (FAO/WHO, 1998a) concluded from the available data that patulin is genotoxic.

### Summary

There is an absence of evidence on cancer in humans and cancer in experimental animals. However, there is evidence that patulin exposure exhibits several KCs in experimental systems in vivo and in vitro; this could support a classification regarding the carcinogenicity of patulin. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of patulin to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 023 Pyrrolizidine alkaloids

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Hydroxysenkirkine (CAS No. 26782-43-4), isatidine (CAS No. 15503-86-3), jacobine (CAS No. 6870-67-3), retrorsine (CAS No. 480-54-6), seneciophylline (CAS No. 480-81-9), and senkirkine (CAS No. 2318-18-5) have each been previously evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3). Lasiocarpine (CAS No. 303-34-4) and monocrotaline (CAS No. 315-22-0) have been classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a) and riddelliine (CAS No. 23246-96-0) has been classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 82 in 2002 (IARC, 2002a). JECFA conducted a health risk assessment for pyrrolizidine alkaloids (FAO/WHO, 2015).

Pyrrolizidine alkaloids (PAs) have never been evaluated as a group. Riddelliine was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

PAs are a group of several hundred secondary plant metabolites that are present in plants as a defence against herbivores (BfR, 2020). They mainly occur in some, but not all, plants of the families Asteraceae, Boraginaceae, and Fabaceae (Schrenk et al., 2020a). Human exposure can occur by direct consumption of plants containing PAs or by food contaminated with plants containing PAs, e.g. via weeds.

In food, the highest levels are found in honey, flower pollen, tea, herbal infusions, herbs and spices, flour, spinach, and some food supplements. Intake in food and beverages has been estimated to be in the low ng/kg bw per day in Germany (BfR, 2020) and in Europe overall (EFSA CONTAM Panel (EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain) et al., 2017), whereas highest levels among toddlers were estimated to be in the hundreds of ng/kg bw per day. Exposure can also occur through herbal medicines (Schrenk et al., 2020a). In some local populations in Asia, Africa, and the Americas, consumption of particular herbs or the contamination of food has led to higher exposures and thereby poisoning (Culvenor, 1983).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In previous *IARC Monographs* evaluations, *sufficient* evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals was identified for lasiocarpine, monocrotaline (IARC, 1987a), and riddelliine (IARC, 2002a). No new studies have been reported for hydroxysenkirkine, isatidine (*limited* evidence), or jacobine since the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a). Schoental et al. (1954) reported that retrorsine induced hepatomas in male rats and papillary adenomas in female rats. Senkirkine was shown to induce haemangioendothelial sarcomas and liver cell adenomas in male rats (Hirono et al., 1979). No studies of carcinogenicity in animals exposed to seneciophylline were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

PAs are ester alkaloids that require biotransformation to be excreted from the body. There are three main pathways for metabolism of PAs: hydrolysis of PAs to release necines and necic acids, N-oxidation to form PA N-oxides, and oxidation of PAs to produce derivatives of dehydropyrrolizidine alkaloid (DHPA), a pyrrolic ester (Chen et al., 2010). Metabolic activation of PAs plays an essential role in their mutagenicity and in liver tumour initiation (Fu, 2017). The liver is the main target organ of the genotoxicity and carcinogenicity of PAs in animal models (Chen et al., 2010; Ebmeyer et al., 2020). DHPAs can bind covalently with proteins and nucleic acids to generate pyrrole–protein and pyrrole–DNA adducts (Chou and Fu, 2006; Zhu et al., 2017, 2022). Recently, it was shown for the first time that the male rat liver microsomal metabolism of lasiocarpine, retrorsine, monocrotaline, and heliotrine (not only for riddelliine) forms their corresponding pyrrolizidine alkaloid N-oxides, producing DNA adducts (DHPA–DNA adducts) in the presence of calf thymus DNA (He et al., 2017). The same research group suggested that a set of DHPA–DNA adducts were biomarkers for PA-induced liver tumour formation (Xia et al., 2013); the PAs tested were retrorsine, lasiocarpine, riddelliine, monocrotaline, riddelliine, senkirkine, heliotrine, and clivorine.

DNA damage of 15 PAs, as measured by micronucleus induction, was observed in HepaRG human liver cells (Allemang et al., 2018). The *in vitro* genotoxicity of a mixture of structurally different PAs with various potencies was tested in HepaRG human liver cells and an additive effect was shown (Allemang et al., 2022). Importantly, Louisse et al. (2019) observed differences in genotoxic potencies of PAs in HepaRG human liver cells using the  $\gamma$ -H2AX in-cell western assay: the group with the highest potency consisted of open diester PAs and cyclic diester PAs (including riddelliine). PAs induced genotoxicity in metabolically competent TK6 cell lines (Li et al., 2020a).

Recent investigations focused on mutational signatures in liver cancer for the PAs as a group (He et al., 2021); approximately one third of resected human liver samples of 34 patients with HCC contained pyrrole–protein adducts. The same authors identified a PA mutational signature (PAMS), derived from DNA adduction and DNA damage induced by retrorsine exposure in experimental mice and HepaRG cells, which they validated in the genomes of patients with PA-positive liver cancer but not in those of patients with PA-negative liver cancer, confirming the specificity of PAMS for PA-associated liver cancers. Furthermore, the

developed PAMS was checked in public liver cancer genome databases across various regions. Remarkably, the specific PAMS related to PA exposure is more highly prevalent in Asian countries than in Europe and North America (He et al., 2021).

Additionally, further research concerned the changes in gene expression of a group of four structurally different PAs (echimidine, heliotrine, senecione, and senkirkine) in primary human hepatocytes (Luckert et al., 2015). Interestingly, 1304 genes were identified as commonly regulated by all four PAs. These genes are linked to HCC, hepatic steatosis, bile duct cancer, proliferation of liver cancer cells, and dysfunction of glucose metabolism (Luckert et al., 2015).

## Summary

No studies on human cancer were available. Previous evaluations (IARC, 1987a) reported *sufficient evidence* in experimental animals for lasiocarpine, monocrotaline, and riddelliine. There is *limited evidence* of carcinogenicity for hydroxysenkirkine and isotidine, and no additional cancer bioassays were identified since the previous evaluation. No cancer bioassays were identified for jacobine or seneciphylline. Senkirkine and retrorsine have been reported to induce tumours in male rats (*limited evidence*). Mechanistic evidence was identified for PAs related to the KCs, including genotoxicity, mostly in experimental systems. One mechanistic study in exposed humans showed mutational signatures of retrorsine (not previously evaluated by IARC) associated with liver cancer. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of pyrrolizidine alkaloids to be warranted and recommended combining evaluations for all PAs in one volume.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 024 Safrole (CAS No. 94-9-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Safrole was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs Supplement 7* in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), on the basis of *sufficient evidence* for cancer in experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

Safrole is the chemical 4-allyl-1,2-methylenedioxy-benzene (C<sub>10</sub>H<sub>10</sub>O<sub>2</sub>), a natural constituent of the sassafras plant oil (up to 93% safrole oil) and camphor tree oil (up to 95% safrole oil). Safrole is also present in extracts and essential oils of numerous plants, e.g. nutmeg, cinnamon, anise, pepper, and sweet basil (European Commission, 2002a; Burdock, 2010; Götz et al., 2023).

In the general population, the main potential routes of exposure to safrole are ingestion and inhalation. Safrole is ingested in edible spices, including sassafras, nutmeg, mace, basil, and their essential oils, and from chewing betel quid. Safrole is also present in cola drinks (Raffo et al., 2013). The average intake (for consumers only) was estimated at 1 mg/person per day from food and spices and 1 mg/person per day from essential oils in 1995, at 0.3 mg/person per day with the 97.5th percentile increasing to 0.5 mg/person per day in 2002, and at 0.1 mg/person per day from nutmeg oil in 2023 (European Commission, 2002a; NTP, 2021a; Davidsen et al., 2023). Safrole was also identified as a minor constituent of bidi cigarettes (mean concentration, 33 µg/cigarette) (Stanfill et al., 2006) and regular tobacco cigarettes (median concentration, 5.2 ng/g of tobacco) (Stanfill and Ashley, 1999). Relatively small amounts of safrole have been released to the environment since 1988, mostly in air emissions (TRI, 2009).

Occupational exposure to safrole may occur by inhalation or dermal contact (HSDB, 2009). Health professionals, such as pharmacists, physicians, and nurses, could be exposed during the formulation, preparation, administration, or clean-up of drugs containing safrole or sassafras. In the US National



Occupational Exposure Survey 1981–1983, the National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) estimated that 6475 workers (5761 women) were potentially exposed to safrole (NIOSH, 1990b).

Safrole has been banned as a food additive by US FDA since 1960 (CFR, 2024, 21 Code of Federal Regulations §189.180) and in the EU since 2008, and maximum levels have been established for food compounds and non-alcoholic beverages that have been flavoured with flavourings and food ingredients in which safrole occurs naturally (European Parliament, 2008). Safrole itself should not be used as a fragrance ingredient; essential oils containing safrole should not be used at such a level that the total concentration of safrole exceeds 0.01% in consumer products (IFRA, 2009).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of safrole. Safrole caused liver tumours in two rodent species and by two different routes of exposure. Liver cancer (HCC) in male mice and benign or malignant liver tumours (HCC, adenoma, or cholangiocarcinoma) in rats of both sexes were observed after a dietary administration of safrole (IARC, 1972, 1976b). Liver cancer (HCC) was also observed in mice of both sexes aged between 7 and 28 days treated with safrole by stomach tube, followed by dietary exposure for up to 82 weeks, and in infant male mice treated with safrole by subcutaneous injection (IARC, 1976b). Additional studies have been identified in mice. The incidence of liver tumours (adenoma and carcinoma) was increased in male mice exposed during infancy through their dams' milk and in adult female mice fed a diet containing safrole (Vesselinovitch et al., 1979a, b; Lipsky et al., 1981; Vesselinovitch, 1983).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Safrole–DNA adducts have been detected in tissues from patients in Taiwan, China, with oesophageal cancer (Lee et al., 2005), oral SCC (Chen et al., 1999), or HCC (Chung et al., 2008). All these patients had a history of habitual areca chewing (areca nut is known to contain a high concentration of safrole). Safrole–DNA adducts were found in peripheral leukocytes from people with a known areca nut chewing history, compared with people without a known areca nut chewing habit (Liu et al., 2004). The genotoxicity of safrole was also tested in vitro in three oesophageal cell lines and four cultures of primary oesophageal keratinocytes from oesophageal mucosa samples of patients with cancer. In two of the oesophageal keratinocyte cultures, adduct formation was increased by treatment with safrole after induction of cytochrome P450 by 3-methylcholanthrene (Lee et al., 2005). Treatment of human buccal mucosa squamous carcinoma (OC2) cells with safrole induced cell proliferation (Huang et al., 2005). In rodents, safrole induced oxidative damage in rat hepatic tissue after a single intraperitoneal injection (Liu et al., 1999) or when treated with gavage (Ding et al., 2015). Safrole induced unscheduled DNA synthesis (UDS) in rat and mouse cultured primary hepatocytes (Burkey et al., 2000). Safrole was mutagenic in mouse lymphoma cells and induced sister-chromatid exchanges (SCE) in Chinese hamster ovary (CHO) cells (NTP, 2024a).

### **Summary**

No studies were identified that evaluated the relation between exposure to safrole and human cancer. There is already *sufficient* evidence that safrole causes cancer in experimental animals. Several studies are available showing evidence of DNA adducts in exposed humans, and of several genotoxicity end-points in human primary cells and in rodents in vivo and in vitro. Safrole induced oxidative DNA damage in rats in vivo, and cell proliferation in human cell line in vitro. The available mechanistic information could support a change in classification. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of safrole to be warranted and recommends evaluating safrole together with estragole (agent 103).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 025 Zearalenone

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Zearalenone was evaluated by IARC in the context of toxins derived from *Fusarium graminearum*, *Fusarium culmorum*, and *Fusarium crookwellense* as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 56 in 1993 (IARC, 1993a). Zearalenone has been evaluated by JECFA (FAO/WHO, 2000), with a PMTDI of 0.5 µg/kg bw per day established.

### Exposure characterization

Zearalenone is a  $\beta$ -resorcylic acid macrolide mycotoxin produced primarily by species of *Fusarium*, such as *Fusarium graminearum*. It is a significant contaminant in both food and feed, with human exposure occurring mainly through the consumption of contaminated food products (IARC, 1993a). Zearalenone is commonly found in cereals such as maize, wheat, barley, sorghum, rye, and rice, and can be present in various food products derived from these grains, including baked goods, pasta, breakfast cereals, and bread. It is also detected in beer, corn oil, and in milk when cows consume contaminated feed (IARC, 1993a; Ropejko and Twarużek, 2021).

The occurrence and level of zearalenone contamination can vary depending on climate conditions, with higher levels often found in countries with warm and wet climates. In the context of climate change, the patterns of exposure to this mycotoxin could change, potentially leading to higher frequencies and concentrations of zearalenone in crops (Ropejko and Twarużek, 2021).

While the primary route of human exposure to zearalenone is through food consumption, specific occupational settings may also pose a risk. Workers handling contaminated raw materials or exposed to organic dust in agricultural or milling environments may be at risk of inhalation exposure to zearalenone (IARC, 1993a; Ropejko and Twarużek, 2021).

### Cancer in humans

A few epidemiological studies have examined the relation between zearalenone exposure and cancer. Pillay et al. (2002) found no significant difference in plasma levels of zearalenone and its metabolites,  $\alpha$ -zearalenol and  $\beta$ -zearalenol, between patients with breast cancer, cervical carcinoma, and healthy people, with mean levels below 0.5 ng/mL. A case–control study (69 cases versus 41 controls) conducted in Tunisia found an association between urinary  $\alpha$ -zearalenol, another metabolite of zearalenone, and incident breast cancer (Belhassen et al., 2015).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1993a), there was *limited* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of zearalenone. Zearalenone was tested for carcinogenicity orally (by diet) in one experiment in mice and in one experiment in rats. An increased incidence of hepatocellular adenomas was observed in female mice and of pituitary adenomas in mice of each sex. No increase in the incidence of tumours was observed in rats (NTP, 1982a).

Since the last evaluation, new studies have been identified. Zearalenone inhibited colorectal tumorigenesis in azoxymethane-induced carcinogenesis in mice, reducing total tumour count, colon weight, colonic crypt depth, and colonic collagen fibrosis (Leung et al., 2023). Prepubertal zearalenone exposure suppressed *N*-methyl-*N*-nitrosourea-induced mammary tumorigenesis in female Sprague-Dawley rats (Nikaido et al., 2003). Maternal exposure to zearalenone during pregnancy did not increase carcinogen-induced mammary tumorigenesis in female rat offspring (Hilakivi-Clarke et al., 1999).  $\alpha$ -Zearalenol in

combination with perfluorooctanoic acid increased the risk of developing mammary tumours induced by 7,12-dimethylbenz[*a*]anthracene (Su et al., 2022).

### Mechanistic evidence

Exposure of human embryonic kidney (HEK293) cells to zearalenone resulted in a concentration-dependent increase in DNA strand breaks, measured using the comet assay (Gao et al., 2013). DNA adducts in female mice and rats treated intraperitoneally or orally with zearalenone were revealed using a <sup>32</sup>P-postlabelling method (Pfohl-Leszkowicz et al., 1995). Zearalenone treatment increased DNA methylation levels in mouse ova. Histone methylations were also altered: histone H3 lysine (H3K)4me2, H3K9me3, and H4K20me1, me2, and me3 levels decreased. Zearalenone, as well as  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -zearalenol, increased the percentage of chromosomal aberrations in HeLa cells and in mouse bone marrow cells (Ayed et al., 2011). Zearalenone induced different types of chromosome aberration in mice; this was concentration-dependent (2–20 mg/kg bw). These doses corresponded to 0.4–4% of the median lethal dose (LD<sub>50</sub>) in mice (Ouanes et al., 2005). Zearalenone induced chromosomal aberrations and micronuclei in both Balb/c mice and in vitro cultures of mouse lymphocytes isolated from mouse spleen (Ben Salah-Abbès et al., 2009). Zearalenone was not mutagenic to *Salmonella* strains TA1538, TA98, or TA100 at any concentration (Bartholomew and Ryan, 1980). Zearalenone demonstrated cytotoxicity against HepG2 cells in vitro and arrested the cell cycle in the G<sub>2</sub> phase, although it did not cause DNA damage (Domijan et al., 2023).

In human hepatocytes (HepG2 cells), oxidative damage was one of the main pathways of zearalenone genotoxicity (Hassen, et al., 2007). Zearalenone induced oxidative stress in human cultured prostate cancer cells DU-145 and LNCaP cells followed by DNA damage and G<sub>2</sub>/M cell cycle arrest (Kowalska et al., 2020).

In human HCC cells, zearalenone and  $\alpha$ -zearalenol significantly increased global levels of DNA methylation and global histone modifications (H3K27me3, H3K9me3, H3K9ac). Expression levels of the chromatin modifying enzymes euchromatic histone lysine methyltransferase (EHMT2), establishment of sister-chromatid cohesion *N*-acetyltransferase 1 (ESCO1), histone acetyltransferase 1 (HAT1), lysine acetyltransferase 2B (KAT2B), protein arginine methyltransferase 6 (PRMT6), and SET domain containing 8 (SETD8) were upregulated. Both compounds also changed expression levels of aryl hydrocarbon receptor (AHR), LXR $\alpha$ , peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor (PPAR) PPAR $\alpha$ , PPAR $\gamma$ , LAFABP, low density lipoprotein receptor (LDLR), GLUT2, AKT1, and hexokinase 2 (HK2) genes (Karaman et al., 2020). Zearalenone modulated the invasiveness of prostate cancer PC-3 cells, depending on *ER* $\alpha$  expression (Kowalska et al., 2018).

Zearalenone decreased mouse egg developmental competence by affecting epigenetic modifications (Zhu et al., 2014). Prepubertal zearalenone exposure caused severe endocrine disruption in female Sprague-Dawley rats (Nikaido et al., 2003). In rats exposed to zearalenone, a notable upregulation of protein expression, specifically of STAT2, STAT6, and ISG15, was observed in the colon cells (Ruan et al., 2023). Zearalenone increased the concentrations of plasma insulin, glucose, testosterone, progesterone, and luteinizing hormone (LH) in rats, while the concentration of plasma estradiol was reduced. It also incited expression of TNF $\alpha$  and secreted frizzled-related protein-4 (SFRP4), and led to atresia of follicles. In the rat, exposure to zearalenone intensely influenced plasma hormonal factors and expression of genes related to the polycystic ovary, increasing the risk of its progression (Abbasian et al., 2018). Zearalenone exposure promoted the expression of tumorigenesis genes YAP1, WW domain containing transcription regulator 1 (WWTR1), and cyclin D1 (CCND1) in mouse granulosa cells (Zhang et al., 2018). In an endometriosis model in mice, zearalenone acted as an antagonist in endometriotic tissue in the presence of a sufficient concentration of estrogen but switched to estrogenic activity in the absence of estrogen in the development of endometriosis. Zearanol, a zearalenone metabolite, induced cell proliferation and protein disulfide isomerase expression in the mammary glands of August Copenhagen Irish (ACI) rats (Zhong et al., 2011).

Zearalenone also inhibited ectopic tissue growth by decreasing inflammatory response in an endometriosis model (Yan et al., 2022).

A cohort study found that zearalenone concentrations in the blood of patients with colon cancer were associated with estradiol and progesterone concentrations (Lisieska-Żołnierczyk et al., 2023). Zearalenone and its metabolites exhibited strong estrogenic potency and influenced the production of progesterone, estradiol, testosterone, and cortisol hormones in the human H295R adenocarcinoma cell line (Frizzell et al., 2011).

At low concentrations, zearalenone accelerated the growth of ER-positive MCF-7 and KPL-1 human breast carcinoma cells but did not affect the growth of ER-negative MDA-MB-231 cells. The acceleration of ER-positive cell growth induced by low-dose zearanol (zearalenone metabolite) involved the downregulation of p21 protein, which resulted in cell cycle progression (Yuri et al., 2006).

Zearalenone promoted the progression of MCF-7 cells by a decrease in the G<sub>0</sub>/G<sub>1</sub> phase and a significant increase in the S phase. The pro-proliferative activity of zearalenone was due to inhibition of apoptosis through regulation of BAX/BCL2 expression (Yu et al., 2005).

In MCF-7 cells, zearalenone and its metabolites  $\alpha$ -zearalenol and  $\beta$ -zearalenol increased the production of CYP1B1-mediated estrogen catechol metabolites, directing the biotransformation of estrogen to 4-hydroxyestradiol, which has been identified previously as a crucial factor in estrogen-induced tumour initiation (Malekinejad et al., 2023). Zearalenone stimulated DNA synthesis, cell proliferation, and anchorage-independent growth in vitro of colon cancer HT29 and SW480 cells. Growth promotion was mediated by the activation of ERK1/2 and YAP1/TAZ signalling (Lo et al., 2021b).

Zearalenone at low concentrations enhanced cell proliferation in colon carcinoma cell line HCT116, increased colony formation, and sped up cell migration after wound healing (Abassi et al., 2016). However, in another study of HCT116 cells, zearalenone inhibited cell proliferation, which was accompanied by an increase in the generation of free radicals, an induction of heat shock protein (Hsp70) expression, and an activation of antioxidant enzymes (catalase and SOD), as well as a loss of mitochondrial membrane potential (El Golli-Bennour et al., 2019).

## Summary

While there are only sparse data in humans and experimental animals on the carcinogenicity of zearalenone, the compound exhibits several KCs in experimental systems, including genotoxicity, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation. This evidence could support a change in the classification of the carcinogenicity of zearalenone. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of zearalenone to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 026 Cyclopeptide cyanotoxins

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Microcystin-LR was classified in 2006 by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), on the basis of strong mechanistic evidence. Nodularin was evaluated as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) (IARC, 2010c).

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a):

Exposure routes of microcystins include drinking contaminated water, bodily contact, inhalation, haemodialysis, and consumption of

contaminated food and blue-green algal dietary supplements. More research has been conducted on microcystins and microcystin-LR in particular than on any other cyanotoxin, and microcystin-LR is the most studied structural variant because of its high occurrence in rivers, lakes, and other reservoirs. The greatest source of exposure to microcystin-LR is water where eutrophication has occurred, and levels may be as high as several milligrams per litre (IARC, 2010c). Of the three routes of exposure to microcystins (dermal, inhalation, and oral), the most important route is thought to be ingestion, via swallowing of contaminated water (drinking-water or through recreational use) and consumption of products such as contaminated blue-green algal supplements (IARC, 2010c).

### **Cancer in humans**

*IARC Monographs* Volume 94 (IARC, 2010c) included evaluations for two cyclic peptides, microcystin-LR and nodularin, both toxins produced by various cyanobacterial species that proliferate under certain conditions in water bodies. The evaluation concerning human cancer was based on ecological studies, mostly for liver cancer, in which source of drinking-water was taken as a surrogate for exposure to the agents. The determination of *inadequate* evidence for cancer in humans was largely due to the non-specificity of this exposure measurement, despite observed associations being quite strong. Since then, there have been more ecological studies of the same type, and a small number of relevant case–control studies. These ecological studies based on drinking-water source provided mixed results.

A hospital-based case–control study of liver cancer from China (Zheng et al., 2017), in which serum concentrations of microcystin-LR were determined by enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay (ELISA), found a dose–response relation. Comparing the highest and lowest exposure quartiles, the relative risk (RR) was 4, after adjustment for other major liver carcinogens.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), there are sparse data showing little evidence of carcinogenicity of individual microcystins in experimental animals.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Microcystin-LR and nodularin are considered to be liver toxins in humans, causing inflammation, and possibly fibrosis in the longer term. A wide range of mechanistic studies of these toxins suggest that they exhibit KCs that could cause or promote cancer.

### **Summary**

Apart from the very limited body of literature, a key issue in assessing the human cancer data is the nature of the exposure assessment. As noted previously, studies of cyanobacteria-related toxins and cancer have variously used source of drinking-water, serum detection of microcystin-LR, and in vitro detection of cyanobacterial species. The presence of a variety of liver toxins in these species complicates the interpretation of studies that focus on single toxins, such as microcystin-LR. The diversity of exposure measures complicates the task of synthesizing the evidence in a coherent manner. Adequate adjustment for other major liver cancer risk factors has been undertaken for the case–control studies but not the ecological studies.

Therefore, it is questionable whether the body of evidence from human studies on microcystin-LR accumulated since the last *IARC Monographs* evaluation would enable a re-evaluation of the status of the

evidence. In the absence of cancer evidence in experimental animals, the classification would most probably remain in Group 2B. There has been no advance on human data for other specific toxins related to cyanobacteria. An evaluation of cyanobacteria exposure might be an alternative but would most probably also lead to a finding of *inadequate* evidence in humans, as there appears to be only one small relevant study. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of cyclopeptide cyanotoxins is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 027 Chronic circadian dysfunction

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Chronic circadian dysfunction has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

A key consideration for the Advisory Group was whether chronic circadian dysfunction is an external agent that lends itself to prevention (this is the scope of the *IARC Monographs* programme). It is problematic to define exposure to what is essentially a physiological response. Exposures and host characteristics that may lead to circadian disruption include night shift work (NSW); occupations leading to jet lag, e.g. as aircrew; sleep duration and timing; artificial light at night (ALAN); timing of diet and time-restricted eating (including night-time fasting); genetics and host characteristics (e.g. chronotype) – these last two would not be suitable topics for *IARC Monographs* evaluations.

There is an interrelationship between these factors, which might not occur at the same level of a causal chain between exposure and cancer. Some of these exposures (NSW, sleep, ALAN) are reviewed next in the present report (agents 028–030).

### Cancer in humans

No studies in humans were available to the Advisory Group for the evaluation of chronic circadian dysfunction. Available studies have evaluated factors that may lead to circadian disruption, e.g. NSW, air crew work, sleep, timing of diet, and ALAN. The submitted nomination for an evaluation of chronic circadian dysfunction focused mostly on suggestions of how to conduct epidemiological studies rather than presenting evidence on how circadian disruption (or chronic circadian dysfunction) could be evaluated within the context of the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Several studies in mice and rats have demonstrated that chronic disruption of circadian rhythm by shifting the animals' daily light–dark schedule or exposing the animals to constant light leads to increased spontaneous tumour formation (IARC, 2020; NTP, 2021b). These studies include models of NSW, in which light and dark periods are inverted, and models of chronic jet lag, where the light period is increased or decreased every few days. The 2019 Working Group that evaluated NSW (IARC, 2020) concluded that there was sufficient evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of alteration in the light–dark schedule.

### Mechanistic evidence

The 2019 Working Group that evaluated NSW (IARC, 2020) found ample evidence that it induces circadian disruption and concluded that there is *strong* evidence in experimental systems that alteration in the light–dark schedule is associated with KCs, based on evidence of effects consistent with immunosuppression, chronic inflammation, and cell proliferation. The Working Group noted several

limitations of mechanistic studies in night shift workers, including small sample sizes, a lack of adjustment for potential confounding factors, and issues around the timing of biological specimen collection. These limitations remain an issue for most human mechanistic studies of NSW published since 2019.

Two studies of social jet lag (discrepancy between biological and social time) in humans observed associations with increased inflammation (Bermingham et al., 2022; Girtman et al., 2022). For example, in a study in 931 participants, social jet lag (assessed as  $\geq 1.5$  hour difference in sleep midpoint on weekdays versus weekend days), was associated with significantly greater fasting levels of glycoprotein acetylation in blood, a marker of systemic inflammation (Bermingham et al., 2022). Mouse models of chronic jet lag have demonstrated evidence for immunosuppression (Aiello et al., 2020; Inokawa et al., 2020). Another study in mice observed suppression of melatonin and glucocorticoid receptors in the liver in association with chronic jet lag (Iwamoto et al., 2014).

### Summary

The nomination poses the issue of whether IARC should evaluate circadian disruption itself. Biological pathways or responses have not usually been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, although there have been some exceptions, including “shift work involving circadian disruption” (IARC, 2010d). Notably, however, the agent was renamed “night shift work” in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124 (IARC, 2020), with measures of circadian disruption described in the mechanistic evidence section. In future, the Advisory Group recommended that the *IARC Monographs* programme evaluate the carcinogenicity of the external factors that generate circadian disruption, e.g. night shift, ALAN, for which there exists evidence in humans and experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of chronic circadian dysfunction is unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 028 Night shift work

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Night shift work (NSW) was classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124 in 2019 (IARC, 2020), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (for cancers of the breast, prostate, and colorectum), *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals, and *strong* mechanistic evidence of immunosuppression, chronic inflammation, and cell proliferation in experimental systems.

### Exposure characterization

As described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124 (IARC, 2020), NSW involves working during the regular sleeping hours of the general population. The disruption of circadian rhythms of body functions as a result of alterations in the environmental light–dark schedule is the most pronounced effect of NSW. NSW is essential for guaranteeing production and activities around the clock. In modern society, the nature of NSW is changing as a result of the diversification of working time patterns. Its prevalence differs between sectors; it is most common in health care, manufacturing, transport, retail, and services. It was estimated (IARC, 2020) that one in five workers worldwide are engaged in NSW, although the definitions, quality, and extent of statistical data vary. Globalization of the labour market has led to increasing use of NSW in LMICs.

### Cancer in humans

Several informative cohort, case–cohort, nested case–control, and case–control studies have evaluated NSW. A large number of the available studies were included in the previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 2020);

most of those examined breast cancer, but prostate and colorectal cancer (CRC) were also investigated. The most important development within the body of research in the last decade has been the refinement and expansion of exposure assessment metrics. However, advances in exposure assessment were mostly confined to case–control studies, and the Working Group put more emphasis on evidence from those studies as compared with cohort studies.

Since 2019, there have been several additional publications and meta-analyses. Some evidence was seen of an association between long-term NSW and postmenopausal breast cancer in a cohort of Swedish women, but there were few cases in the long-term exposure group (Gustavsson et al., 2023). There was no association with breast cancer in premenopausal women. A higher risk of breast cancer was observed among women who had ever been exposed to NSW in the Finnish Twin Cohort study (Schernhammer et al., 2023). Overall, there was little evidence that rotating shift work or work at night was associated with a higher risk of breast cancer in the US Sister Study cohort (Sweeney et al., 2020).

An analysis in the UK Biobank cohort found no significant associations between NSW and prostate cancer overall (HR, 1.07; 95% CI, 0.92–1.25) or by rs10830963 polymorphism (GC versus CC, HR, 0.94; 95% CI, 0.86–1.03; and GG versus CC, HR, 0.89; 95% CI, 0.75–1.05) (Yang et al., 2022a). However, these authors found a significant interaction between NSW exposure and rs10830963 polymorphism (melatonin receptor) for the incidence of prostate cancer. A positive association between NSW and rotating shift work and prostate cancer was found in the Japan Collaborative Cohort Study (Arafa et al., 2021), while no associations were observed for breast or CRC. A positive association between NSW (especially rotating shift work) and prostate cancer, with some evidence of chronotype interaction, was seen in the CAPLIFE study in Spain (Lozano-Lorca et al., 2020). Some evidence of circadian genes modulating prostate cancer risk was observed among night shift workers in the EPICAP case–control study in France (Wendeu-Foyet et al., 2020). In that study, there was no overall association between NSW and prostate cancer, although an association was found for aggressive prostate cancer.

For CRC, a positive association was found with long-term NSW among Black women in the USA (Barber et al., 2023). There was no evidence of an association with CRC for men working in night shifts in a pooled study of two German cohorts, although some associations were observed in subgroups (Wichert et al., 2020). Some evidence of an interaction of two insulin receptor substrate genes for NSW in CRC was observed in the Nurses' Health Study, indicating that rotating night shifts might increase the risk of CRC in women with abnormal insulin receptor pathways. Overall, a trend for an increased risk of CRC was observed among those working night shifts for longer than 15 years (Shi et al., 2020).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

There are no major changes in the evidence on cancer in experimental studies; this evidence has already been evaluated as *sufficient* twice (IARC, 2010d, 2020). The 2019 Working Group evaluating NSW specifically concluded that there is *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of an alteration in light–dark schedule.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

In the 2019 evaluation (IARC, 2020), the Working Group identified that the mechanistic evidence in experimental systems is consistent and coherent with respect to the KCs on the basis of effects consistent with chronic inflammation, immunosuppression, and cell proliferation. However, the evidence was only suggestive in exposed humans for effects on estrogen levels in female night shift workers. The Working Group noted several limitations of studies in humans, including small sample sizes, lack of adjustment for potential confounding factors, and issues concerning the timing of biological specimen collection. Since 2019, studies evaluating KCs in exposed humans have addressed one or more of these limitations. For example, the HORMONIT study in Spain found lower levels of immune biomarkers, as well as changes in



melatonin and sex-steroid hormone production, in male auto workers working rotating night shifts (Harding et al., 2022a, b). Studies carried out for the Lifelines cohort observed increases in inflammatory biomarkers in men working night shifts (Bizzarri et al., 2022); in addition, DNA methylation pattern effects were observed among women working at night (Wackers et al., 2023). Other large-scale studies are ongoing, with end-points related to the KCs (e.g. within the Exposome Project for Health and Occupational Research, EPHOR; <https://www.ephor-project.eu/about-ephor>), for which results should become available in the next 2–3 years.

### Summary

The carcinogenicity of NSW is a very active area of research, concerning human cancer and mechanistic studies. There have already been two evaluations by the *IARC Monographs* programme, most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124 (IARC, 2020). The Nightingale prospective cohort study (Pijpe et al., 2014) has been designed with high-quality exposure assessment, and results are pending. The Advisory Group suggested that, given the complexity of this agent and the methodological issues, a new evaluation should only be conducted when substantial new evidence becomes available, particularly on mechanistic studies in humans. This emphasis on mechanistic evidence is suggested because that was the area of research with weaker studies during the 2019 evaluation. Although there have been new studies and meta-analyses of epidemiological data for cancer, the evidence concerning cancer in humans has not evolved considerably, compared with that available in 2019. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of NSW is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 029 Artificial light at night

### Current IARC/WHO classification

The effect of ALAN has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. NSW (which can serve as a proxy for ALAN exposure) has been classified by IARC in 2019 (IARC, 2020) as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A). It remains unknown whether exposure to ALAN is carcinogenic in the general population (representing different exposure patterns to ALAN).

### Exposure characterization

In contemporary society, artificial lighting has become ubiquitous, extending beyond urban areas to illuminate suburban and rural regions in most parts of the world (Gaston et al., 2015; Falchi et al., 2016; Cox et al., 2022). With the increasing use of light-emitting diode (LED) lamps, screens, and other electronic devices that emit light, individuals are exposed to ALAN for extended periods, altering natural day–night cycles (Cajochen et al., 2011; Kyba et al., 2017, 2023; Sánchez de Miguel et al., 2020; 2022; Falchi and Bará 2023). The principal uses of ALAN are outdoor lighting (e.g. street lights, security lighting, decorative illumination, advertisements), indoor lighting in homes, workplaces, commercial buildings, and public spaces, (e.g. general illumination, task lighting, screens, decorative purposes), transportation lighting (e.g. roadways, airports, railways), and recreational and entertainment lighting (e.g. sports facilities, entertainment venues, outdoor events).

Residential areas near brightly lit public spaces or industrial zones may experience higher levels of ALAN, through both direct and indirect sources (Katabaro et al., 2022; Bará and Falchi, 2023). Methods for exposure assessment in earlier studies included satellite mapping with low resolution and without an evaluation of colour (e.g. evaluation of short wavelengths).

## Cancer in humans

A recent search of the literature identified 26 studies on ALAN and cancer (15 cohort, 11 case–control). For most of the studies, outdoor ALAN data came from images from the Defense Meteorological Satellite Program (DMSP), with fewer obtaining data from the Visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite (VIIRS), from both DMSP and VIIRS, the International Space Station, or from self-reported data. In all 10 indoor ALAN studies, the exposure was assessed using questionnaires (relying on poorly worded and highly subjective assessments). There are numerous studies on breast cancer (Davis et al., 2001; O’Leary et al., 2006; Li et al., 2010; Bauer et al., 2013; Hurley et al., 2014; Portnov et al., 2016; James et al., 2017; Keshet-Sitton et al., 2017; White et al., 2017; Garcia-Saenz et al., 2018; Johns et al., 2018; Ritonja et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2020; Clarke et al., 2021; Xiao et al., 2021a; Sweeney et al., 2022; Prajapati et al., 2023; Song et al., 2023a); overall, they indicate that exposure to higher levels of outdoor ALAN are associated with a higher risk of breast cancer. On excluding studies with low-quality assessment, the association is weakened. The association between indoor ALAN and breast cancer risk is weak, and exposure assessment in those studies is very heterogeneous. A small number of high-quality studies, which, importantly, include blue light, have reported associations of ALAN with cancer of the prostate (OR, 2.05; 95% CI, 1.38–3.03), breast (highest versus lowest tertile, adjusted OR, 1.47; 95% CI, 1.00–2.17) (Garcia-Saenz et al., 2018); and colorectum (OR, 1.6; 95% CI, 1.2–2.2; highest versus lowest tertile of blue light spectrum) (Garcia-Saenz et al., 2020).

Also, several meta-analyses of the association between ALAN and breast cancer have found increased risks of breast cancer among participants with the highest level of visual light exposure compared with those with the lowest levels of exposure (Lai et al., 2021; Urbano et al., 2021; Wu et al., 2021a).

Exposure to ALAN has been associated with several other cancer sites, but for most there are only one or two studies available for distinct cancers: Chowdhury-Paulino et al. (2023) on prostate cancer; Xiao et al. (2021b) on pancreas cancer; Zhong et al. (2023a) on acute lymphoblastic leukaemia (ALL) in Hispanic children; Medgyesi et al. (2023) on endometrial cancer in postmenopausal women; Park et al. (2022) on liver cancer; Zhang et al. (2021a) on thyroid cancer; and Zhong et al. (2020) on non-Hodgkin lymphoma (NHL) among women.

## Cancer in experimental animals

The only available evaluation of the evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals was made with respect to alteration in the light–dark schedule. There is *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of alteration in the light–dark schedule. This evaluation, given in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124 (IARC, 2020), was based primarily on lifetime carcinogenicity studies reported by Anisimov et al. (2004) and Kettner et al. (2016).

Kettner et al. (2016) reported a series of independent studies in which male and female mice of three strains (one wildtype and two genetically engineered) were exposed to shifts in the light–dark schedule, in the form of repeated 8-hour advances, until the mice were aged 90 weeks. Compared with control mice of each strain exposed to a regular light–dark schedule of 12 hours in light and 12 hours of darkness, exposure to shifts in the light–dark schedule was observed to significantly increase the incidence of HCC in all three strains. Anisimov et al. (2004) compared tumour incidence and latency in wildtype female mice exposed for life to either a light–dark schedule of 12 hours in light and 12 hours of darkness (control) or continuous light (24 hours in light and 0 hours in darkness). Statistically significant increases in the incidence of lung adenocarcinoma, malignant lymphoma, and total tumours were observed in mice exposed to continuous light. Positive results reported in a few other studies of rodents exposed to shifts in the light–dark schedule or continuous light, and in many studies using carcinogen-induced or transplantable tumour models, support the carcinogenicity of alterations in the light–dark schedule demonstrated in the lifetime carcinogenicity evaluations of Kettner et al. (2016) and Anisimov et al. (2004).

Joechle (1964) reported an increased occurrence of spontaneous mammary tumours in mice housed in constant light. Mhatre et al. (1984) reported that induced mammary tumour incidence was increased in rats exposed to constant light from before birth, compared with those exposed to dark nights. Notably, the administration of melatonin to these rats in a pattern that simulated night-time exogenous release reversed the deleterious effects of constant light. Blask et al. (2005) worked with melatonin-depleted blood from premenopausal women exposed to light at night and found that there was stimulation of the growth of human breast cancer xenografts in nude rats. Schwimmer et al. (2014) demonstrated that dim light during the dark phase also promotes tumour progression in mice with induced mammary adenocarcinoma. Guerrero-Vargas et al. (2017) reported, for an experimental model, that constant lighting conditions may also be favourable for enhanced tumour growth and significantly increase tumour volume and weight, compared with exposure to 12 hours in light and 12 hours of darkness, owing to increased macrophage recruitment and upregulation of genes involved in lipogenesis and glucose uptake. Zubidat et al. (2018) showed that female BALB/c mice previously inoculated with tumour cells and exposed to night schedules with different types of light were able to generate tumours. Yonis et al. (2019) studied the association between light pollution and disruption of daily rhythms; their results indicated cancer progression. Agbaria et al. (2019) reported on a mouse model of breast cancer induced by ALAN and melatonin. Mice exposed to ALAN had significantly reduced 6-sulfatoxymelatonin levels and increased body mass, tumour volume, and lung metastasis, compared with controls. Such effects are decreased by increases in melatonin. Walker et al. (2020) studied light pollution and cancer, setting a basis for light at night (LAN). Walker et al. (2021) reported an association between ALAN and behaviour in tumour-bearing mice. They found that ALAN exacerbated mammary tumour growth in female mice. These authors hypothesized that exposure to ALAN accelerated mammary tumour growth. Adult (> 8 weeks) female C3H mice received a unilateral orthotopic injection of FM3A mouse mammary carcinoma cells ( $1.0 \times 10^5$  cells in 100  $\mu$ L) into the fourth inguinal mammary gland. Regardless of tumour status, tumour-bearing ALAN-housed mice demonstrated reduced latency to tumour onset (day 5) and increased terminal tumour volume (day 21). It was found that ALAN reduced the latency of tumour onset and increased final tumour volume. This finding supports an association between ALAN and carcinogenesis observed in rodent studies, providing compelling data for a causative effect.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Emmer et al. (2018) studied the disruption of the light–dark cycle, primarily by exposing animals to LAN, which disturbs biological rhythms and has widespread physiological consequences because of mechanisms such as melatonin suppression, sympathetic stimulation, and altered circadian clock gene expression, which affect metabolism and genomic instability. Stevens and Davis (1996) studied the effect of LAN on laboratory animals and research outcomes. They hypothesized three aspects for such effects: light effects on melatonin, electromagnetic field (EMF) effects on melatonin, and melatonin effects on breast cancer. The strongest of these aspects was considered the effects of light on melatonin. It is clear that the normal nocturnal melatonin rise in humans can be suppressed by light of sufficient intensity. The evidence for an effect of melatonin on breast cancer in experimental animals is strong, but the evidence in humans is scant and difficult to collect. The weakest aspect of the circumstantial case is the EMF effect on melatonin production. IARC (2020) reported several experimental animal designs in which cell proliferation, as a sign of carcinogenicity, was observed. Laboratory studies using animals also reported a positive relation between exposure to LAN and tumour formation and progression. Dauchy et al. (1999) considered that rapid tumour growth, increased tumour incidence, and progression are not limited to exposure to constant light. Marpegan et al. (2009) investigated the effect of diurnal variation in endotoxin-induced mortality in mice and found a correlation with the production of proinflammatory factors. Martynhak et al. (2017) reported altered circadian timing of behaviour with night-time dim light exposure in *Per3<sup>-/-</sup>* mice, but not wildtype mice. Guerrero-Vargas et al. (2017) reported, from experiments using an experimental model, that constant

lighting conditions might enhance tumour growth with exposure to 12 hours in light and 12 hours of darkness, owing to increased macrophage recruitment and upregulation of genes involved in lipogenesis or glucose uptake. Zubidat et al. (2018) demonstrated one of the KCs, namely, cell proliferation, in experiments with female BALB/c mice, and showed that chronic exposure to dim LAN disrupted the immune response in old-aged female mice, besides decreasing longevity in aged female mice. Yonis et al. (2019) studied the association between light pollution and disruption in daily rhythms; their results indicated metabolic and hormonal disorders, which affected cell proliferation, metabolism, and epigenetics. They found that ALAN induced DNA hypomethylation in pancreatic tissue, compared with controls, but not in hepatic tissue. Overall, ALAN affected metabolic and hormonal physiology at different levels, indicating flexible crosstalk between melatonin and both epigenetics and metabolic levels. There is a hypothesis regarding breast cancer development and exposure to short wavelength ALAN, as multiple studies suggest that there is a possible link between them.

Agbaria et al. (2019) analysed mouse tumour, lungs, liver, and spleen in a study of the total activity of DNA methyltransferases and levels of global DNA methylation (GDM). Mice exposed to ALAN had significantly reduced 6-sulfatoxymelatonin (6-SMT) levels and increased body mass, tumour volume, and lung metastasis, compared with controls. Such effects were decreased by increases in melatonin. Epigenetic modification was demonstrated in this mouse model through an analysis of the role of DNA methyltransferase, which is suggested to be a mediator for nocturnal melatonin suppression and to play an integral role in circadian regulation, including cell division. It was found that DNA methyltransferase activity and GDM levels showed tissue-specific responses. Thus, changes in cell proliferation and epigenetics were observed. The possibility of early detection and management of breast cancer by monitoring melatonin and GDM levels as early biomarkers of ALAN circadian disruption was suggested. Walker et al. (2021) reported an association between ALAN and an increased risk of developing breast cancer through an effect on cell proliferation. Additionally, tumour-bearing mice housed in dark nights exhibited increased anxiety-like behaviour. Liu et al. (2022b) demonstrated that circadian rhythms disrupted through chronic exposure to dim LAN (dLAN) impaired immune response and survival in aged mice, affecting KCs, such as immunological changes. Aged female mice exposed to dLAN displayed inflammation, as a measure of cell-mediated immune response and decreased lifespan, compared with female mice housed with dark nights. Together, these data indicated that chronic exposure to dLAN affects lifespan in aged female mice and suggested that female mice are more susceptible than males to the detrimental consequences of disrupted circadian rhythms. Richter et al. (2022) indicated that ALAN is a potential precursor of cancer, or at least has high-risk as a carcinogenic agent.

## Summary

While ALAN is a component of NSW, which is currently classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A), it has not itself been specifically evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, in either the work environment or the general population. An evaluation of ALAN by the *IARC Monographs* programme is relevant, owing to the extensive and increasing exposure of individuals to ALAN and the emerging evidence concerning the potential effects of ALAN on health. Exposure to ALAN, especially at night, and particularly exposure to blue light, disrupts the body's circadian rhythms. The intrinsically photosensitive retinal ganglion cells (ipRGCs) in the eye are most relevant for circadian rhythm regulation and melatonin production and are most sensitive to short wavelengths (i.e. blue light).

Emerging epidemiological evidence has suggested potential associations between ALAN exposure and an increased risk of certain cancers, particularly breast cancer, in studies conducted in the general population. Methods for exposure assessment of ALAN will be a main issue in any evaluation. Currently, there is *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of alteration in the light–dark schedule, and these studies were performed with artificial light, as seen for NSW in *IARC Monographs* Volume 124

(IARC, 2020). There is evidence suggesting that ALAN exposure exhibits multiple KCs. The available evidence could support a classification of carcinogenicity of ALAN. Overall, the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ALAN to be warranted and recommended an evaluation in the latter half of the period, given the many potentially informative studies currently underway.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 030 Insomnia and sleep disruption

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Insomnia and sleep disruption have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Sleep was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of sparse evidence for human cancer for some factors related to poor sleep quality.

### Exposure characterization

The Advisory Group considered that insomnia itself is an unclear target for an evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* programme, because it is a specific type of (or response to) sleep disruption; therefore, it is not further considered here. There is an extensive international body of literature on sleep patterns, on factors associated with sleep duration and, to a lesser extent, on sleep quality (e.g. Brockmann et al., 2017; Park et al., 2023). Studies have compared self-reported sleep patterns with sleep patterns measured using sensors, indicating a degree of exposure misclassification in self-reports. Studies have evaluated sleep duration and sleep quality, and several studies have focused on obstructive sleep apnoea. The prevalence of sleep disorders examined in the general population is high; for example, in the USA, 33% of adults reported short sleep duration (< 7 hours/day) (Pankowska et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

The relations between sleep, mental health, and chronic disease have gained considerable attention in recent years, and sleep has become identified as a fundamental aspect of human health. In these studies, several sleep attributes have been considered, including sleep duration and quality, as well as specific sleep disorders. Sleep disorders have mostly been associated with neurocognitive, metabolic, and cardiovascular effects, but the association between sleep and cancer has also become a subject of growing interest (Gozal et al., 2016). Numerous studies are available, but results are not entirely consistent. Studies suggest that disrupted sleep patterns may contribute to an increased susceptibility to certain types of cancer, including melanoma and cancers of the breast, prostate, colorectum, and central nervous system (CNS) (Luo et al., 2013; Papantoniou et al., 2021; Turner et al., 2022; Chiang et al., 2023b; Collatuzzo et al., 2023; Papantoniou et al., 2023; Von Behren et al., 2023). One study of the UK Biobank cohort evaluated the combination of sleep and physical activity and observed that participants with poor sleep and low levels of physical activity had the highest mortality risks for total cancer and lung cancer (Huang et al., 2022b). Some studies identified U-shaped associations with sleep duration, e.g. for stomach and CRCs (Papantoniou et al., 2021), similar to the overall pattern observed with all-cause mortality. Perturbations in sleep architecture and continuity have been associated with both initiation and exacerbation or prognosis of cancer.

Rather than using a population approach, most studies on obstructive sleep apnoea were conducted in clinical settings (Nieto et al., 2012; Campos-Rodriguez et al., 2013; Marshall et al., 2014; Theorell-Haglöw et al., 2023). Some studies (Richmond et al., 2019; Huo et al., 2021) used Mendelian randomization approaches. A large study (Richmond et al., 2019), using data from the UK Biobank and the Breast Cancer

Association Consortium (BCAC), observed an adverse effect of increased sleep duration on risk of breast cancer, whereas evidence for insomnia symptoms was inconsistent.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

One study in mice has shown that sleep fragmentation promoted tumour development in chemically induced colon cancer (Lee et al., 2023a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Studies of sleep disruption in animals and in humans have demonstrated associations with several KCs, including DNA damage (Andersen et al., 2009; Cheung et al., 2019) (e.g. oxidative DNA damage), oxidative stress (KC5) (Villafuerte et al., 2015; Shah et al., 2023) (e.g. antioxidant enzyme activity), inflammation (KC6) (Mullington et al., 2010) (e.g. cytokines), immunosuppression (KC7) (Ragnoli et al., 2022) (e.g. increased viral illness), and epigenetic changes (Gaine et al., 2018) (e.g. methylation levels in specific genes). Sleep fragmentation in mice was found to reprogramme the epigenome of haematopoietic stem and progenitor cells, as measured via chromatin accessibility of enhancer elements, increasing cell proliferation and reducing haematopoietic clonal diversity (Kiss et al., 2022; McAlpine et al., 2022).

### **Summary**

Research on sleep and cancer has considerably increased in recent years, with evaluations of sleep duration, sleep quality, and specific pathologies, such as obstructive sleep apnoea. The evidence is not entirely consistent, with, perhaps, more evidence for breast cancer and sleep duration. However, there exists a considerable body of evidence (positive and negative) that refers to an effect of disturbed sleep in the general population, however it is defined, e.g. as short duration of sleep, insomnia, or apnoea. There are still several issues concerning the methods used, since most studies evaluate sleep through self-reports. Although there are well-validated questionnaires and scales to examine sleep, there is a need to examine studies using objective measures, since it has been shown that there is a considerable degree of exposure misclassification when sleep is examined only through questionnaires. In the context of sleep apnoea, it is also important to evaluate studies in the general population in addition to the more common clinical-based studies. The evidence appears strongest for an association between sleep duration (with perhaps a U-shape relation) or sleep quality and breast cancer.

There is evidence from an initiation–promotion study in experimental animals demonstrating increased occurrence of cancer in association with sleep fragmentation, and studies in both animals and humans have linked several KCs to sleep disruption. The evaluation of sleep within the context of other factors that generate circadian disruption could also be considered.

#### **Recommendations**

Insomnia: No evaluation

Sleep disruption: High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **031 Long working hours**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Long working hours have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. A WHO/International Labour Organization (ILO) Joint Estimates analysis of the burden of disease for long working hours has been published (Pega et al., 2021).

## Exposure characterization

Long working hours have not been clearly defined in the literature. The International Labour Organization's Hours of Work Convention states a threshold for working hours that certain employed workers should not exceed; the definition includes working hours of 8 hours or more than 12 hours/day or 48 hours/week (ILO, 1919). It has been reported that epidemiologists often use categories of > 40 hours/week for long working hours, with the highest category at > 55 hours/week (Pega et al., 2021) or > 11 hours/day (Hattori et al., 2022). *WHO/ILO Joint estimates of the work-related burden of disease and injury* (WHO, 2024b) indicates that, globally in 2016, 488 million people (8.9% of the global population) were exposed to long working hours ( $\geq 55$  hours/week) (Pega et al., 2021; WHO, 2024b). Between 2000 and 2016, the global prevalence of long working hours increased by 9.3%. Men were more exposed than women, and adults aged between 25 and 50 years were more exposed than older adults. There are marked global regional differences, with the highest exposure prevalence observed in south-eastern Asia (11.7%), and the lowest in Europe (3.5%) (Pega et al., 2021).

Long working hours have been reported to be associated with other cancer risk factors, such as alcohol intake and lack of physical activity (Heikkila et al., 2016).

## Cancer in humans

Epidemiological evidence suggests that working long hours has a detrimental effect on health, increasing morbidity and mortality from ischaemic heart disease and stroke (e.g. Pega et al., 2021). The effect of long working hours on cancer risk could be through an association with lifestyle-related exposures, such as sedentary behaviour (see agent 032 in the present report) and lack of physical activity or excessive alcohol intake. Very few studies evaluated long working hours and cancer risk (Nielsen et al., 2008; Heikkila et al., 2016; Hattori et al., 2022). The main positive association identified in the largest study (Heikkila et al., 2016), which was based on the Individual-Participant-Data Meta-analysis of Working Populations (IPD-Work) Consortium, is for breast cancer. While no association was observed for overall cancer incidence, nor for lung, colorectal, or prostate cancer in that study, working 55 hours/week or longer was associated with an increased risk of female breast cancer in age-adjusted analyses (HR, 1.54; 95% CI, 1.09–2.18). This association remained after adjustment for socioeconomic position; night-time work, shift work, and BMI; smoking; or alcohol intake. No adjustment, however, was made for important reproductive factors, e.g. parity. In a cohort study in Japan (Hattori et al., 2022), breast cancer risk tended to be associated with exposure to longer working hours: RR was 1.30 (95% CI, 0.33–5.19) in a group working 9–10 hours/day and 1.74 (95% CI, 0.46–6.64) in a group working  $\geq 11$  hours/day, compared with a group working 7–8 hours/day.

## Cancer in experimental animals

No studies on models of long working hours and cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic data related to long working hours were sparse. A study in 7470 young and middle-aged workers observed that those working for  $\geq 52$  hours/week had significantly greater circulating levels of high-sensitivity C-reactive protein, a marker of inflammation (Lee et al., 2021b). In another study of 12 487 people, however, no significant overall association between longer working hours ( $\geq 55$  versus < 55 hours/week) and C-reactive protein was observed (Velazquez-Kronen et al., 2023). A study in 604 people observed significantly greater epigenetic age acceleration (as measured by the Hannum and Horvath clocks) in association with working > 40 hours/week (Freni-Sterrantino et al., 2022).

## Summary

Only a few studies examined long working hours and cancer risk. In two out of three studies, including a large cohort study based on a consortium, a positive association was found for breast cancer, but the adequacy of the confounding control was questionable in one study. No studies of cancer in animals and few mechanistic studies of long working hours were identified. The mechanistic studies would not support a meaningful evaluation of the carcinogenicity of long working hours. More time is needed to allow more information through research to accumulate. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of long working hours is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 032 Sedentary behaviour

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Sedentary behaviour has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Sedentary behaviour was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of consistent evidence of a positive association with CRC, with mechanistic evidence related to several KCs.

### Exposure characterization

There are different definitions of low physical activity and sedentary behaviour. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), in the Global Burden of Disease project, low average weekly physical activity (at work, at home, transport-related, and recreational) is defined as < 8000 total metabolic equivalent minutes per week (Forouzanfar et al., 2016). The prevalence of low average weekly physical activity was estimated to be 46.6% for men and 39.4% for women worldwide, leading to more than 1.6 million all-cause deaths and 35 million disability-adjusted life-years in 2015 (Forouzanfar et al., 2016). A WHO report (WHO, 2022b) provided global estimates to show that 1.4 billion adults (27.5% of the world's adult population) do not meet the recommended level of physical activity. There are wide differences in levels of physical activity between regions, age groups, and sexes. In adults in 2016, levels of inactivity in high-income countries (36.8%) were twice those in low-income countries (16.2%) (Guthold et al., 2018).

Sedentary behaviour is also defined as “any waking behaviour characterized by an energy expenditure  $\leq 1.5$  [metabolic equivalents] while in a sitting or reclining posture” (Sedentary Behaviour Research Network, 2012). It has been estimated that adults spend approximately 8.2 hours/day sitting down (Baumann et al., 2017) but these estimates differ by region, age, and sex. A major component of sedentary behaviour is sedentary work, which has been increasing globally, particularly in industrialized countries, where technology and automation have led to more desk-bound jobs. With the increase in office-based work, remote work arrangements, and jobs in such sectors as information technology, finance, and administration, many people spend significant portions of their day sitting at desks or in front of computers.

### Cancer in humans

In the last available Global Burden of Disease analysis (Forouzanfar et al., 2016), cancer deaths due to physical inactivity were estimated for colorectal and breast cancers, which were presumed to be causally related to physical inactivity based on the available literature. A total of 119 000 (95% CI, 84 000–156 000) deaths due to cancers of the colon and rectum and 48 000 (95% CI, 35 000–61 000) deaths due to cancer of the breast, in 2015, were also estimated to be attributable to low physical activity. There are more than 50 observational epidemiological studies on sedentary behaviour and cancer, and findings have been summarized in systematic reviews and meta-analyses (Schmid and Leitzmann, 2014; Shen et al., 2014; Ma



et al., 2017; Mahmood et al., 2017; Chan et al., 2019; Hermelink et al., 2022; Yuan et al., 2023a). Sedentary behaviour has been shown to increase the risks of colorectal, breast, ovarian, and endometrial cancers.

The most comprehensive review and meta-analysis, which included all previous estimates, evaluating 14 meta-analyses covering 17 different cancer sites from 77 original studies was by Hermelink et al. (2022), who report: “High [sedentary behaviour] levels increase the risk for developing ovarian, endometrial, colon, breast, prostate, and rectal cancers, with RRs of 1.29 (95% confidence interval (CI) = 1.08–1.56), 1.29 (95% CI = 1.16–1.45), 1.25 (95% CI = 1.16–1.33), 1.08 (95% CI = 1.04–1.11), 1.08 (95% CI = 1.00–1.17), and 1.07 (95% CI = 1.01–1.12), respectively”. Some of these findings were modified when including studies with more extensive confounding adjustment, for example the association for endometrial cancer became null in the meta-analysis of studies adjusting for BMI. A subsequent meta-analysis on endometrial cancer (Yuan et al., 2023a), reported similar findings, although adjustment for BMI had a smaller effect. In other meta-analyses, sedentary behaviour was found to be associated with a slight to moderate increased risk of cancer (meta-RRs of 1.08 to 1.54), including breast, lung, and CRC (Schmid and Leitzmann, 2014; Shen et al., 2014; Zhou et al., 2015).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies investigating cancers spontaneously arising in experimental animals after sedentary behaviour were available to the Advisory Group; all of the animal models reported in the last 5 years (2020–2024) were based on cancer induction or inoculation, as described next.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Between 2020 and 2023, 19 rodent studies investigating the effects of some form of exercise versus sedentary behaviour on benign or malignant tumour induction or inoculation outcome were published. Of these, 16 were conducted in mice, using five different strains, and three were conducted in the rat, using three different strains. Studies in both mice and rats included both sexes and a wide array of tumour or cancer cell types (including mammary, prostate, colon, liver, melanoma, muscle, and pancreas). Also, experiments were designed to investigate the effect of exercise before, after, or before and after cancer induction or inoculation. Among these 19 studies, 15 of 16 mouse studies (94%) and 3 of 3 rat studies (100%) reported worse outcomes for sedentary behaviour groups than for exercise groups. Studies in rodents show that sedentary behaviour has adverse health effects (Arfianti et al., 2020; Garritson et al., 2020; Guarino et al., 2020; Buss et al., 2021; Esteves et al., 2021; Farber et al., 2021; Lamkin et al., 2021; LeGuennec et al., 2021; Yazdani et al., 2021; Gupta et al., 2022b; Malicka et al., 2022; Parry et al., 2022; Sadowska et al., 2022; Wood et al., 2022; Collao et al., 2023; Esteves et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023c; Nascimento-Gonçalves et al., 2024). One mouse study found no statistically significant difference between groups, but did find a statistically significant difference in the number of polyps and the presence of mucosal ulcerations in the colons of the mice (Neves et al., 2023). Unfortunately, since all of these models are based on tumour or cancer induction or inoculation, the role of sedentary behaviour in carcinogenesis is unclear. Hence, it remains to be seen whether physical activity may be related to cancer prevention; however, it is clear that physical activity may be related to reduced disease-related fatigue or improved survival or physical functioning after cancer induction or inoculation in mice and rats. In these cancer experimental animal studies and other mechanistic evidence studies, there is ample evidence that, in order of frequency, chronic inflammation (KC6), oxidative stress (KC5), epigenetic alteration (KC4), immunosuppression (KC7), and modulation of receptor-mediated effects (KC8) are suboptimal. Overall, there is evidence that sedentary behaviour is associated with these KCs (while not necessarily inducing them), and that physical activity may have reduced them.

In humans, the promotion of apoptosis in cancer cells or of innate immunity against cancer cells, or the expression of myokines, which act systemically and have anti-inflammatory and insulin-sensitizing effects

and increase thermogenesis in adipose tissue, appear to be the main mechanisms in which exercise protects against cancer (Ruiz-Casado et al., 2017). The Advisory Group noted that it is challenging to distinguish sedentary behaviour from physical activity, i.e. exercise, in humans and experimental systems.

### Summary

Consistent positive associations in humans have been found between sedentary behaviour (or, alternatively, physical inactivity) and breast and colon cancer or CRC in large studies. The Advisory Group suggests that it is important for the *IARC Monographs* programme to evaluate the cancer hazard associated with sedentary behaviour, even if a separate effort is undertaken in the *IARC Handbooks* programme to evaluate the preventive effect of physical activity, because these behaviours, although related, may demonstrate independent effects. There is no evidence regarding cancer in experimental animals. The mechanistic evidence appears to be strong in exposed humans and experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of sedentary behaviour to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 033 Obesity

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Obesity has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. However, absence of excess body fatness was evaluated by the *IARC Handbooks* programme in 2016 (IARC, 2018c), much of the available literature on obesity was reviewed, with the conclusion that there is *sufficient* evidence that absence of excess body fatness prevents cancers of the oesophagus, gastric cardia, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, colorectum, kidney, breast, endometrium, and ovary, and multiple myeloma.

### Exposure characterization

Obesity is defined as having a BMI (defined as the weight in kilograms divided by the square of the height in metres) of 30 or more. Obesity can be divided into class 1 (BMI, 30.0–34.9), class 2 (BMI, 35.0–39.9), and class 3 (BMI  $\geq$  40.0) (Lauby-Secretan et al., 2016).

Worldwide, an estimated 880 million adults were obese in 2022, which is 11% of all adults (10% of men and 13% of women) (Phelps et al., 2024). For children, the prevalence of obesity is often combined with that of overweight (BMI, 25–30): it was estimated that 39% of children under the age of 5 years were overweight or obese in 2020 and more than 340 million children and adolescents (aged 5–19 years) were either overweight or obese in 2016 (WHO, 2021a). The global prevalence of obesity nearly tripled between 1975 and 2022. In many LMICs, there has been a rapid increase in the prevalence of obesity and overweight, particularly in urban settings (WHO, 2021a; Phelps et al., 2024).

### Cancer in humans

There is substantial scientific evidence indicating a relation between excess body fatness and an increased risk of developing various cancers. As reviewed in the *IARC Handbooks* Volume 16 (IARC, 2018c), increased risks for the highest BMI category, versus normal BMI (18.5–24.9), have been reported for cancers of the oesophagus (adenocarcinoma), gastric cardia, colon and rectum, liver, gall bladder, pancreas, female breast (postmenopausal), corpus uteri, ovary, kidney (renal cell carcinoma), meningioma, and thyroid, and for multiple myeloma. Furthermore, associations are suspected with male breast cancer, fatal prostate cancer, and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (Lauby-Secretan et al., 2016). Research continues on these and other cancer types that may be associated with obesity.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Several studies in rodents demonstrated that obesity increases the incidence of cancers of the mammary gland, colon, liver, pancreas, prostate, and skin, and promotes tumorigenesis (IARC, 2018c).

### Mechanistic evidence

The review of mechanistic evidence conducted by the Working Group for *IARC Handbooks* Volume 16 (IARC, 2018c) did not explicitly use the framework of the KCs. The Working Group did conclude that there is *strong* evidence that sex hormone metabolism and inflammation are major mechanisms underlying the link between excess body fatness and certain cancers. They concluded that there is *moderate* evidence for the role of insulin and insulin-like growth factor. Evidence for the involvement of epigenetic alterations, oxidative stress, and DNA repair was considered *weak*. Studies in humans and animal models continue to demonstrate that obesity is associated with chronic inflammation, attributed to the accumulation of Th1 cells, CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells, and proinflammatory macrophages in adipose tissue (Harris et al., 2022). This inflammation response leads to oxidative stress, with oxidative DNA damage, decreased antioxidant capacity, and induction of antioxidant enzymes, as observed in both human and animal studies (Setayesh et al., 2018). There is also evidence of immunosuppression in the context of obesity. The immunosurveillance system in adipose tissue seems to become compromised with a decline in regulatory T cells, NKT cells, and eosinophils, and a rise in exhausted memory B cells (Harris et al., 2022).

### Summary

The Working Group for *IARC Handbooks* Volume 16 (IARC, 2018c) concluded that there is *sufficient* evidence that the absence of excess body fatness prevents cancer in humans. Despite this evaluation that an absence of excess body fatness is a cancer-preventive factor, the Advisory Group considered it relevant for the *IARC Monographs* programme to consider efficient ways to include obesity or excess body fatness in the list of agents classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), given that the evidence for cancer in humans that was reviewed in the *IARC Handbooks* was largely the same as would be considered in an *IARC Monographs* evaluation. There is evidence in experimental animals that obesity induces tumours. Examining mechanistic evidence for obesity (or overweight) using the framework of KCs could also provide valuable scientific insight. For consistency, obesity or overweight could be evaluated with agents that are already classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1). A substantial minority of the Advisory Group considered that obesity should not be evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, either because its absence is already listed as a cancer-preventive factor in the *Handbooks*, or because they did not consider it to be an exogenous agent. However, the majority of the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of obesity to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 034 Social isolation and loneliness

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Social isolation and loneliness have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Loneliness and social isolation are considered as two separate constructs that may occur independently (i.e. one without the other). People lacking human contact often feel lonely, but social isolation and loneliness are also found not to be significantly correlated. There may be a need to distinguish between social isolation

and loneliness in assessing cancer hazards. It is recognized that measures of social well-being are complex and subjective concepts and go beyond simply describing the situational facts of a person's life (Perissinotto and Covinsky, 2014).

Estimates of the prevalence of loneliness and social isolation in the community differ and may involve some groups more than others, such as low-income adults, young adults, older adults, adults living alone, people with chronic diseases or disabilities, immigrants, or individuals who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer (LGBTQ). Some studies report “marital status (being single)” as a proxy for loneliness, but marital status is a complex variable that involves many different social and behavioural aspects, wider than social isolation and loneliness alone (Yanguas et al., 2018).

### **Cancer in humans**

There are very few studies (perhaps only three) evaluating an association of loneliness or social isolation (or both) with cancer risk. In a longitudinal study in 2570 middle-aged men in Finland, Kraav et al. (2021) described loneliness as being associated with total cancer incidence (and, in a separate publication, mortality) and some specific cancers. Results were attenuated after adjustment for lifestyle and health-related covariates. Fleisch Marcus et al. (2017) reported that, in a cohort of 16 044 US adults with 17–23 years of follow-up, social isolation and higher neighbourhood poverty were independently associated with increased risk of cancer mortality. This increase was more pronounced in women than in men. Associations were attenuated on adjustment for individual socioeconomic status. A follow-up study on breast cancer survival, embedded within the Nurses' Health Study in the USA, evaluated social networks and social support before and after diagnosis. (Kroenke et al., 2006). Socially isolated women had an elevated risk of mortality after a diagnosis of breast cancer, and this was interpreted by the authors as related to a lack of access to care, specifically beneficial caregiving from friends, relatives, and adult children (and not an indication that loneliness is causally related to cancer incidence). Factors associated with cancer survivorship are not within the scope of the *IARC Monographs* programme.

Several mediators may influence any association between social isolation and cancer; these include the influence of social isolation and loneliness on health behaviours. Some studies have found loneliness and social isolation to be associated with poorer health behaviours, including smoking, physical inactivity, and poorer sleep.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Only one study measured cancer parameters in spontaneously occurring cancer in isolated rodents versus grouped rodents; the rodents were studied over their entire life-cycle (15 months); social isolation was associated with increases in tumour size, number, distribution, and malignancy (Hermes et al., 2009).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There is evidence that social isolation alters cell proliferation, cell death, or nutrient supply (KC10), induces chronic inflammation (KC6), increases neovascularization (KC9), induces oxidative stress (KC5), and is immunosuppressive (KC7), in order of frequency (Fleisch Marcus et al., 2017; Kraav et al., 2021). However, complete and precise mechanisms have yet to be described. Moreover, drastic differences in outcome were observed: while 9 of 12 studies showed increased tumour burden, one showed decreased tumour volume and no difference in survival (Farbstein et al., 2021), another showed only transient differences (Madden et al., 2013), and yet another showed drastically reduced survival (Budiu et al., 2017). Hence, the body of evidence is inconclusive. In addition, exposure to social isolation was almost always for only a few weeks at most (i.e. subchronic), except for two studies, in which isolation lasted 5 (Verza et al., 2021) or 15 months (Hermes et al., 2009), i.e. was chronic. Studies using longer exposure to social isolation and less-potent inductions that mirror carcinogenesis in humans more closely are lacking. Currently, the

research literature in humans is rich in observational studies based on self-reports on social isolation and loneliness in subjects already diagnosed with cancer, in subjects with advanced cancer, or in cancer survivors. Major gaps exist from the lack of studies monitoring subjects before the diagnosis of cancer (such as in smokers or subjects with cancer mutations, such as the breast cancer-associated gene BRCA1) and involving repeated observations of the mechanisms and KCs most frequently found in social isolation and loneliness (listed previously), using blood tests to monitor proinflammatory factors, for example, over long periods of time, and comparing these variables for high versus low levels of social isolation and loneliness.

### Summary

Overall, there is sparse evidence in humans on the association of social isolation and loneliness with cancer. There are methodological issues regarding the definition of the exposure. The interpretation of the findings on such variables as loneliness and social isolation, which involve numerous interconnected pathways to disease, is complex. Overall, only one study investigated cancer in experimental animals, and the bulk of the data appears to be inadequate. The mechanistic evidence appears to be inadequate. On the one hand, while the findings in experimental animals are suggestive of isolation-stress-induced changes to tumour growth and proinflammatory and neoangiogenic supports, they cover a narrow range of observational perspectives, rarely evaluating naturally or spontaneously occurring cancers, and some incoherence remains across studies. On the other hand, the studies in exposed humans most often involve self-reporting and most are concerned with the situation after cancer has already developed. More time is required to allow better designed and informative studies to take place. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of social isolation and loneliness is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 035 Tobacco smoking and secondhand tobacco smoke

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tobacco smoking and secondhand tobacco smoke were classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100E in 2009 (IARC, 2012f). There is *sufficient* evidence that each causes lung cancer. There is also *sufficient* evidence that active smoking causes cancers of the oral cavity, pharynx, oesophagus, stomach, colorectum, liver (in smokers and their children), bile duct, pancreas, nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses, larynx, upper aerodigestive tract, uterine cervix, ovary, kidney, renal pelvis and ureter, urinary bladder, and (acute and chronic) myeloid leukaemia. There is *limited* evidence that active smoking causes breast cancer, and that parental smoking causes both childhood acute leukaemia (lymphocytic and myeloid) and all childhood leukaemia combined. There is *limited* evidence that secondhand smoke causes cancers of the pharynx and larynx.

Secondhand smoke was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new epidemiological studies showing a positive association between active smoking, secondhand smoke, or both, and breast cancer, as well as studies showing associations between parental smoking and childhood leukaemia.

### Exposure characterization

In the context of the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, massive efforts have been underway over the past 20 years to reduce the rates of tobacco use globally. Still, WHO estimates that there remain 1.25 billion adult tobacco users across the globe (WHO, 2024c). While, on average, roughly 20% of the global population are tobacco users, this percentage is higher in the South-East Asian Region (26.5%) and European Region (25.3%). The majority of tobacco users (83% globally) smoke tobacco (in any form)

(WHO, 2024c). Rates have been declining among women in most regions, but those among women in the European Region are more than twice the global average and are declining only slowly.

### Cancer in humans

Since the most recent *IARC Monographs* evaluation (IARC, 2012f) in 2009, many cohort studies have reported a positive association between smoking (active, secondhand, or both) and breast cancer in different populations, including in women who do not consume alcohol (e.g. Gram et al., 2015, 2022; Gaudet et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2018b; He et al., 2022a; Scala et al., 2023). Positive associations have also been observed for different tumour subtypes (e.g. by menopausal or hormone receptor status). The risk is higher with increasing number of years smoked before first childbirth, and exposure–response relations have been observed between risk of breast cancer and age of starting to smoke or number of cigarettes, years, and pack-years smoked (Jones et al., 2017a; Scala et al., 2023). At least 15 reviews or meta-analyses have concluded that there is an association between smoking (active, secondhand, or both) and a higher risk of breast cancer, although of modest magnitude, e.g. Scala et al. (2023) found a meta-RR of 1.12 (95% CI, 1.08–1.16) for a smoking intensity of 20 cigarettes/day. Causal conclusions are reflected in the incorporation of burden estimates for breast cancer, owing to both tobacco smoking and secondhand smoke exposure, as well as estimates of the attributable fraction from tobacco smoke exposure (e.g. Ou et al., 2022; Tran et al., 2022; Azadnajafabad et al., 2023).

New studies are available on the association between parental tobacco smoking and childhood cancer (including brain tumours and leukaemia) since the previous evaluation in *Monographs* Volume 100E (IARC, 2012f). A meta-analysis of parental risk factors for childhood brain tumours estimated a meta-RR of 1.18 (95% CI, 1.00–1.40) for maternal smoking > 10 cigarettes/day during pregnancy in cohort (but not case–control) studies (Onyije et al., 2022). In a meta-analysis of 17 case–control studies, paternal exposure before conception and during pregnancy was associated with childhood ALL; meta-RRs were 1.15 (95% CI, 1.04–1.27) for paternal exposure before conception and 1.20 (1.12–1.28) for exposure during pregnancy (Cao et al., 2020). Findings were robust to a variety of sensitivity analyses related to confounding, and evidence of a positive trend with increasing exposure was also observed: risk of ALL was approximately doubled at roughly 35 cigarettes/day prenatally. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), pooled and meta-analyses of childhood AML from the Childhood Leukaemia International Consortium reported an increased risk and an exposure–response relation between paternal smoking and childhood AML. More recently, positive associations were observed between paternal smoking before conception, during pregnancy, and after birth and childhood AML (but not ALL) in Costa Rica (Frederiksen et al., 2020).

### Mechanistic evidence

Many of the compounds in tobacco smoke, e.g. polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons (PAHs), aromatic amines, and *N*-nitrosamines, have been found to induce mammary tumours in experimental animals. Several studies have identified an association of epigenetic markers of maternal prenatal smoke exposure with genetic deletions seen in cases of childhood ALL (Xu et al., 2021a).

### Summary

The recent literature suggests that evidence has strengthened for a causal association between tobacco smoking and secondhand tobacco smoke and several additional cancer types, including breast cancer and childhood ALL. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of tobacco smoking and secondhand tobacco smoke to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 036 Electronic nicotine delivery systems

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS), also known as electronic cigarettes or e-cigarettes, have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. ENDS were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of mechanistic evidence related to DNA adduct formation or a reduction in DNA repair activity in exposed humans and experimental systems, including in studies of rodents exposed to vapour from e-cigarettes.

### Exposure characterization

Electronic cigarettes are battery-powered devices designed to deliver nicotine without combusting tobacco. Using an e-cigarette is commonly known as vaping. ENDS generate aerosols by heating a liquid (known as an e-liquid) composed of nicotine and flavours in propylene glycol (propane-1,2-diol) or glycerol (propane-1,2,3-triol) (Lechasseur et al., 2022). The variety of devices and e-liquids has increased substantially over the years (CDC, 2019a). ENDS became widely available around 2010, and quickly emerged as the most popular alternative to combustible cigarettes. In the USA, more than 5.6 million adults reported ENDS use in 2018–2019 (Cook et al., 2023). Surveys on ENDS awareness and use among urban adults in five large Chinese cities in 2017–2018 showed that 4.8% of respondents had ever used ENDS, and 0.9% had used ENDS in the previous 30 days (Huang et al., 2020a). In the UK, the percentage of then-current users of ENDS increased from 1.2% of the population in 2012, to 9.1% in 2023 (ASH, 2023).

The 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a) noted the large variety of carbonyl compounds produced by heating glycerol and propylene glycol, including formaldehyde (IARC Group 1), acrolein (Group 2A), and acetaldehyde (Group 2B), as well as propanal, glyoxal, and methylglyoxal (Group 3) (Bekki et al., 2014; Pisinger and Døssing, 2014; Pisinger, 2015; Kim et al., 2016). ENDS vapour also contains volatile organic compounds, including benzene (Group 1), styrene (Group 2A), ethylene benzene (Group 2B), and toluene (Group 3) (Pisinger and Døssing, 2014; Pisinger, 2015; Kim et al., 2016). Many other potentially carcinogenic substances have been reported in ENDS, including nanoparticles, heavy metals, and tobacco-specific nitrosamines (Group 1), such as NNN and NNK (Goniewicz et al., 2014; Pisinger and Døssing, 2014; Pisinger, 2015; Kim et al., 2016). In addition, a variety of flavouring compounds (e.g. diacetyl) may be present in electronic cigarette refill fluids.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Chronic exposure (12 weeks) to e-cigarette smoke (ECS) induced lung adenocarcinoma and bladder urothelial hyperplasia in male FVB/N mice (Tang et al., 2019), implicating ECS as a carcinogen in mice. Although FVB/N mice are known to have increased cancer rates, expected neoplasms are lung alveolar–bronchiolar tumours (Huang et al., 2008), not adenocarcinoma, which arises from a different lung cell type. Hence, this suggests that the lung adenocarcinoma observed by Tang et al. (2019) is relevant to ECS exposure. However, the Advisory Group has noted that the duration of the study (12 weeks) was inadequate, and that the study was performed only in one sex and one species (male mice).

Rats initiated with *N*-butyl-*N*-(4-hydroxybutyl)nitrosamine (BBN) and then exposed to nicotine through drinking-water had dose-dependent increases in the incidence of urothelial carcinoma of the urinary bladder (Dodmane et al., 2014).

### Mechanistic evidence

Carcinogenicity in A/J mice after full-lifespan (15-month) exposure to aerosols generated from heated tobacco products was less severe than that in mice exposed to cigarette smoke, with reports of numerous statistically significant, dose-dependent increases in nasal and laryngeal epithelial hyperplasia, metaplasia, or “hyperplasia of metaplastic epithelium”, compared with a group with exposure only to air ( $P < 0.01$ , minimum) (Wong et al., 2020). Lung function was reduced, and lung histopathological findings were positive. In addition, urogenital problems, which were described as apparently “related to congenital factors rather than test item exposure”, might have been associated with tobacco heating system (THS) use since “in previous studies, this mouse strain did not present with urogenital problems” (Wong et al., 2020, p. 63), and since urothelial hyperplasia was previously observed in at least three other ECS or nicotine studies in rodents (Dodmane et al., 2014; Suzuki et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2019). Nicotine exposure through drinking-water was previously associated with hyperplasia of the urothelium in female Wistar Han rats, and in female C57BL/6 mice, but to a lesser extent (4/10 mice versus 7/10 rats) (Dodmane et al., 2014). Importantly, nicotinic acetylcholine receptor (nAChR) inhibitors prevented proliferation and hyperplasia induced by nicotine (Suzuki et al., 2018), supporting a causal relation.

Lee et al. (2018) showed that long-term exposure (12 weeks) to ECS led to DNA adducts and reduced DNA repair activity in the lungs, heart, and bladder of male FVB/N mice, and to reduced DNA repair proteins in their lungs; in addition, they showed that treatment of human BEAS-2B lung and UROtsa bladder cells with NNK plus nicotine also damages DNA and reduces repair activity in vitro (Lee et al., 2018), making cells more susceptible to the accumulation of mutations. Several lines of evidence point towards: the creation of DNA adducts and reduction of DNA repair (Lee et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2019); increased proliferation and hyperplasia (Dodmane et al., 2014; Suzuki et al., 2018; Tang et al., 2019; Wong et al., 2020); the induction of chronic inflammation and immunosuppression (Wong et al., 2020; Bhat et al., 2023); and the induction of oxidative stress (Flach et al., 2019; Bhat et al., 2023). In addition, there is strong potential for the hundreds of different flavour additives in ENDS to be genotoxic (Hung et al., 2020). Lung damage was recently reported, together with the induction of chronic inflammation (Phillips et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2022b; Zhao et al., 2024). Epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition was observed in vitro (de Lima et al., 2023), as was increased migration (Flach et al., 2019). Many reports exist on the effects of nicotine (the major compound found in ENDS) on metastasis (Momi et al., 2013; Shimizu et al., 2019) and there is at least one report on the effects of e-cigarettes on metastasis (Kyte and Gewirtz, 2018).

### Summary

There is no evidence regarding cancer in humans. Overall, there is some evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Ample mechanistic evidence is available, suggesting that ENDS exhibit multiple KCs across the full range of systems, including exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ENDS to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 037 Cannabis smoking

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Cannabis smoking has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Cannabis smoking was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of findings of an association with testicular



cancer (in particular, for non-seminoma testicular cancer) in humans and mechanistic evidence of mutagenicity and of modulation of receptor-mediated effects.

### Exposure characterization

The term cannabis describes the dried seeds, stems, flowers, and leaves of the *Cannabis sativa* plant. Inhaling smoke from combusting the plant's flowers, leaves, resin, or oil created thorough distillation or extraction is the most common method of consumption. The psychoactive effects of cannabis plant are attributed to tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) (CDC, 2022a)

After alcohol and tobacco, cannabis is the third most widely used controlled substance worldwide (Peacock et al., 2018). In the USA, cannabis is the most commonly used federally illegal drug; in 2021, about 19% of Americans had smoked cannabis at least once (SAMHSA, 2022). In Canada, 94% of recreational cannabis users in 2017 reported having consumed the drug by smoking it (Government of Canada, 2017).

The chemical composition of cannabis smoke has been addressed in only a few studies. The presence of known carcinogens, such as some PAHs, in cannabis smoke has been reported. PAHs are found in lower concentrations in mainstream cannabis smoke than in tobacco smoke; in sidestream smoke, the concentration of PAHs is higher in cannabis than in tobacco (Moir et al., 2008).

With the potential for additive health effects, the co-use of both cannabis and tobacco is relatively common. For example, in the USA, 21% of young adults in general had co-used tobacco and cannabis in the previous 30 days (Cohn et al., 2019). This co-use of tobacco and cannabis can take several forms: cannabis rolled in a cigar leaf (blunt), cannabis and loose-leaf tobacco combined in a joint (spliff), or sequential smoking of cannabis and then cigarettes (chasing) (Reboussin et al., 2021). There may be occupational and environmental exposure to secondhand cannabis smoke (Wiegand et al., 2020).

### Cancer in humans

At the time of the 2019 Advisory Group meeting (IARC, 2019a), most studies of upper aerodigestive tract or lung cancers had mixed results or null findings, with challenges noted about potential confounding by tobacco smoking. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), four epidemiological studies (one prospective cohort and three case-control studies) in Sweden and the USA each reported increased risks of testicular cancer. The Swedish study found a twofold RR among heavy cannabis users, compared with non-users (Callaghan et al., 2017), and a pooled analysis of the three US case-control studies found an association, specifically with non-seminoma testicular cancer.

Since then, more evidence has accrued for various cancer types. In 2019, a review with pooled analysis of 25 studies (19 case-control, 5 cohort, 1 cross-sectional) was published. For case-control studies, an association was not found between any previous use of marijuana and head and neck SCC or oral cancer. Marijuana use for > 10 years was associated (in three case-control studies) with testicular germ cell tumour (OR, 1.36; 95% CI, 1.03–1.81;  $P = 0.03$ ;  $I^2 = 0\%$ ) and non-seminoma testicular germ cell tumour (OR, 1.85; 95% CI, 1.10–3.11;  $P = 0.04$ ;  $I^2 = 0\%$ ) (Ghasemiesfe et al., 2019).

Cohn et al. (2021) reviewed studies on cannabis and cancer risk for epidemiologic studies published between 2014 and November 2020; 40 epidemiological studies on cannabis smoking and the risk of cancer were identified. For lung cancer, there were four case-control studies: in two studies conducted in Tunisia ORs of 8.2 (95% CI, 1.3–15.5) and 2.4 (95% CI, 1.6–3.8) were reported. A population-based study in Los Angeles, USA, found no association between cannabis use and risk of lung cancer for more joint-years of use, whereas a study in New Zealand reported a very modest increase in risk.

For testicular cancer, there were mixed results in three case-control studies and one cohort study. A study conducted in Washington state, USA reported a twofold risk for daily cannabis use compared with no use, and similar levels of risk, whether cannabis was used for < 10 years or  $\geq 10$  years. A cohort study among

49 343 men, conducted in Sweden, showed no association, except that an OR of 2.57 (95% CI, 1.02–6.50) was observed for more than 50 times of cannabis use [the study did not specify whether exposure routes other than smoking were considered] (Cohn et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), no studies were identified regarding cancer in experimental animals for exposure to cannabis smoke or combustion products. The Advisory Group noted that evidence from experimental animals is complicated by the fact that cannabis use for any purpose, whether recreational or research, is banned in several countries.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Eight recent studies relevant to the KCs are available, focused on KC2 and KC3 (is genotoxic; alters DNA repair or causes genomic instability), KC6 (induces chronic inflammation), or KC7 (is immunosuppressive). Three studies declared smoking to be the main route of exposure to cannabis. One study observed an increase in micronucleated cells in buccal mucosa, as well as DNA breakage in peripheral blood cells in marijuana smokers (suggesting KC2 and KC3) (Souza et al., 2020). Another study found increased expression of toll-like receptor 2 (TLR2) in cannabis smokers (suggesting KC6) (Bailey et al., 2019). The third study, an investigation of mixed types of cannabis use, including smoking, found that women who reported cigarette smoking and marijuana use had lower plasma levels of the anti-inflammatory cytokine IL-10 than did women who did not report cigarette smoking or marijuana use (suggesting KC6) (Saadat et al., 2022). These studies were conducted in exposed humans. One study found that cannabis is related to many congenital anomalies and fulfils epidemiological criteria of causality (suggesting KC2 and KC3) (Reece and Hulse, 2022). Ajrawat et al. (2022) reported that humans exposed to cannabis in various forms have statistically significantly higher levels of eotaxin (a chemoattractant of eosinophils) and interleukin subunit IL-12p40 (produced mostly by activated inflammatory cells, including macrophages, neutrophils, microglia, and dendritic cells, after contact with pathogenic or inflammatory agents). Cannabis users were reported to have 30% higher levels of proinflammatory cytokines than non-users (Krsak et al., 2021). Additionally, cannabis is shown to have anti-inflammatory effects, with BMI also playing a role in this mechanism (suggesting KC7) (Schrock et al., 2022). Studies in mouse models on cannabis smoke exposure unveiled numerous KCs, including KC5, KC6, KC7, and possibly KC10.  $\Delta^9$ -THC caused oxidative stress (KC5) and inflammation (KC6) in endothelial cells (Wei et al., 2022). In a mouse model, cannabis smoke modulated immune cell populations and mediators in both male and female BALB/c mice, with increases in airway and lung tissue macrophage populations, including tissue-resident alveolar macrophages, monocyte-derived alveolar macrophages, and interstitial macrophage subpopulations (KC6) (Fantauzzi et al., 2021). Acute inhalation of cannabis smoke modulated the pulmonary immune response in mice, decreasing the percentage of lung alveolar macrophages while increasing that of lung interstitial macrophages, and decreasing percentages of lung dendritic cells, and Ly6C-intermediate and Ly6C-low monocytes, while increasing those of lung neutrophils and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells (KC6, KC7) (Haidar et al., 2023). Marijuana exposure led to severe airway hyperresponsiveness, inflammation, tissue destruction, and emphysema in CD1 mice (Helyes et al., 2017). Apoptosis and autophagy (in addition to oxidative stress) were also observed in human gingival epithelial cells (Tazi et al., 2022). Hence, numerous KCs are highlighted by these studies: KC2, KC3, KC5, KC6, KC7, and KC10.

### **Summary**

There appears to be evidence supporting an association between cannabis smoking and cancer in humans, specifically non-seminoma testicular cancer. There is no evidence regarding cancer in experimental animals. The evidence that cannabis smoking exhibits KCs in exposed humans, in human primary cells, and

in experimental systems appears to be convincing. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cannabis smoking to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 038 Disinfection by-products in water, including haloacetic acids

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Some haloacetic acids (HAAs) have been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Bromodichloromethane, bromochloroacetic acid, dibromoacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, and dichloroacetic acid were previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals, in *IARC Monographs* Volumes 71 in 1998, 101 in 2011, and 106 in 2012 (IARC, 1999d, 2013c, 2014b). Other HAAs, such as bromodichloroacetic acid, chlorodibromoacetic acid, and tribromoacetic acid have not been evaluated. HAAs and other disinfection by-products were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence of bladder cancer in humans (for mixtures of HAA in disinfected drinking-water), cancer in experimental animals, and mechanistic evidence for several KCs, including electrophilicity, genotoxicity, alteration of DNA repair, and oxidative stress.

Disinfection by-products are considered in the WHO Guidelines for Drinking-Water Quality (WHO, 2024d).

### Exposure characterization

HAAs, specifically chlorinated or brominated di- and tri-HAAs, and trihalomethanes (THMs) are predominant by-products of the water disinfection process (WHO, 2004). Chlorine-based disinfection agents (e.g. chlorine, chloramine, chlorine dioxide) react with organic molecules in the source water to produce HAAs and THMs. The HAAs most frequently detected in drinking-water are monochloroacetic acid, dichloroacetic acid, trichloroacetic acid, monobromoacetic acid, bromodichloroacetic acid, and dibromoacetic acid; the THM most commonly found in drinking-water is chloroform. Bromoform, dibromochloromethane, and bromodichloromethane are other THMs (NTP, 2018c).

Some haloacetic acids are listed as high production volume chemicals by the US Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA, 2024a). In the USA and European countries, HAAs and THMs constitute between 50% and 75% of all the halogenated disinfection by-products (Krasner et al., 2016a).

Exposures in western Europe and North America were considerably higher before the introduction in the 1980s or 1990s of regulations limiting concentrations of trihalomethanes in drinking-water. There is a lack of evidence on the concentration of disinfection by-products in drinking-water and of time trends at a global level (Evlampidou et al., 2020; Villanueva et al., 2023). Dermal exposure and inhalation are major routes of exposure for the general population (showering, washing dishes, and swimming pools), and the ingestion of tap water – plain or in instant drinks, or in food prepared using chlorinated drinking-water – is another possible route (NTP, 2018c).

Information regarding occupational exposure is scarce; however, occupational exposure in pool attendants and water treatment plant employees has been documented (Westerlund et al., 2015; NTP, 2018c).

### Cancer in humans

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), there is extensive evidence on THMs and bladder cancer, from around 10 cohort and case–control studies. Most studies identified a positive association, and a positive exposure–response relation, for THMs, even at concentrations below the current

regulatory limits of around 80–100 µg/m<sup>3</sup> for THMs (Villanueva et al., 2004; Costet et al., 2011). An increased risk has frequently been found in men but not women. Increased risks have also been found, in most studies, of CRC. Epidemiological evidence on HAAs is limited to three studies conducted in the Iowa Women's Health Study, examining CRC (Jones et al., 2019), cancer of the endometrium (Medgyesi et al., 2022), and kidney cancer (Jones et al., 2017b), with mixed findings. Sparse data indicate a positive association between exposure to HAAs and THMs and rectal cancer. A plausible mechanism of action involving glutathione *S*-transferase theta 1 (GSTT1) has been postulated (DeMarini et al., 1997; Pegram et al., 1997) and was identified in a large bladder cancer case–control study in Spain, (Cantor et al., 2010) but this finding was not observed in a study in New England (Beane-Freeman et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As noted in the 2019 IARC Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), carcinogenicity associated with exposure to bromodichloroacetic acid has been observed in many studies of experimental animals, demonstrating an increased occurrence of various malignant and non-malignant neoplasms. The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities also referred to an NTP monograph (NTP, 2018c) that summarized findings from 41 rodent studies. Based on these studies, the NTP classified 6 of the 13 HAAs in chlorinated drinking-water studied as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen”. Of these six HAAs, three have not yet been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Bromodichloromethane, bromochloroacetic acid, and dichloroacetic acid were previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. The occurrence of liver neoplasms in association with di- and tri-HAA exposures and the occurrence of malignant mesotheliomas associated with three bromide-containing HAAs, bromodichloroacetic acid, chlorodibromoacetic acid, and tribromoacetic acid, which have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, were reported. Bromodichloroacetic acid administered in drinking-water caused liver tumours in rats and mice. Four of the six HAAs were also found to be associated with an increased occurrence of various malignant and non-malignant neoplasms, including mesothelioma and mammary tumours (NTP, 2018c).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

On the basis of evidence from studies of bacteria, rodents, and human cell lines, the 2019 IARC Advisory Group (IARC, 2019a) concluded that HAAs show many of the KCs, including electrophilicity and the ability to induce genotoxicity, alter DNA repair, cause oxidative stress, alter nuclear receptor signalling, alter the cell cycle, and alter cell proliferation or cell death. A cancer hazard assessment for 13 HAAs that were evaluated for carcinogenesis in rodents (NTP, 2018c), and that included literature searches for mechanistic studies focused on the KCs (Atwood et al., 2019), identified experimental evidence linking HAAs to most of the KCs, with the strongest evidence observed for electrophilicity, genotoxicity, induction of oxidative stress, and alteration of cell energy metabolism, and weaker responses for receptor-mediated effects and epigenetic effects. Trichloromethanes have been shown to cause chronic inflammation and altered immune responses in exposed humans (Villanueva et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

There is extensive evidence for a positive association between disinfection by-products in water and cancer in humans, particularly bladder and CRCs. Studies have most frequently modelled levels of THMs in drinking-water. There are few studies on HAAs, and all evidence comes from a single cohort.

Several bioassay studies of HAAs have demonstrated increased occurrence of cancers, and HAAs have been linked to many of the KCs. Evidence has been demonstrated for the carcinogenicity of dichloroacetic acid, dibromoacetic acid, bromochloroacetic acid, and bromodichloroacetic acid in rodents, and there is strong evidence that chlorodibromoacetic acid and tribromoacetic acid are involved in mechanisms linked

to carcinogenesis. There is evidence of an association between THMs and other major disinfection by-products and bladder cancer and chronic inflammation and immune responses in exposed humans.

A main issue to be addressed is that the epidemiological evidence is available for a mixture (all disinfection by-products or, more frequently, THMs), while there is evidence for cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic data for individual compounds in this group. Therefore, HAAs and THMs and some of the halogenated by-products resulting from drinking-water disinfection may be considered for joint evaluation as disinfection by-products. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of disinfection by-products in water, including haloacetic acids, to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 039 Metalworking fluids

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Metalworking fluids have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Metalworking fluids were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence of higher rates of bladder cancer and several other cancer types in workers exposed to metalworking fluids in the automotive industry, as well as positive cancer bioassay evidence for certain specific mixtures, and mechanistic evidence of genotoxicity.

### Exposure characterization

Metalworking fluids are a complex mixture of oil- or water-based fluids and additives used for lubricating and cooling metals during operations like cutting and grinding. They are often classified as straight fluids (neat or mineral oils), soluble fluids (a mixture of water-based fluids and mineral oils), and synthetic fluids (water-based, no oil). Some water-based metalworking fluids have been shown to be contaminated with mycobacteria (Kreiss and Cox-Ganser, 1997; Wilson et al., 2001) and endotoxins (Dahlman-Höglund et al., 2022). In the course of a range of operations involving metal processing, inhalation and dermal exposures are likely. The use of metalworking fluids in automotive and other industries is widespread, and occupational exposures are still commonplace. Specific agents for which relevant data are available, including animal carcinogenicity bioassays, include those used in the general machining and grinding of automotive aluminium parts and in light to moderate machining and grinding of light steel, stainless steels, hardened steels, and other materials (NTP, 2015). A proprietary oil-based metalworking fluid used for cleaning tools and parts, and during grinding, drilling, cutting milling as a lubricant and coolant, was tested by the US NTP (2016e), as described below.

### Cancer in humans

There is an extensive body of observational research into the association between occupational exposure to metalworking fluids and cancer risk, yielding mixed findings. As described in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), modest positive associations have been identified for various tumour sites, with compelling evidence derived from numerous investigations within a large pooled cohort of automobile workers in the USA (Eisen et al., 1994, 2001; Bardin et al., 1997; Sullivan et al., 1998; Agalliu et al., 2005; Thompson et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007; Friesen et al., 2009, 2011; Costello et al., 2011; Betenia et al., 2012; Shrestha et al., 2016; Garcia et al., 2018b). Given the challenges in assessing exposure, for human data, quantitative metrics in exposure–response evaluation are generally lacking. Nonetheless, several longitudinal studies using exposure surrogates have examined exposure–response relations, finding positive associations for cancers of the female breast, bladder, oesophagus, rectum, prostate, and larynx (Eisen et al.,

2001; Agalliu et al., 2005; Malloy et al., 2007; Colt et al., 2011, 2014; Shrestha et al., 2016; Colin et al., 2018; Garcia et al., 2018b).

Additionally, a study has provided evidence of gene–environment interactions concerning occupational exposures and susceptibility loci for bladder cancer. Specifically, concerning glutathione S-transferase mu 1 (GSTM1), the relevance of rs798766 (TMEM129-TACC3-FGFR3) for specific exposure to straight metalworking fluids was highlighted (Figuerola et al., 2015).

Since the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), four new studies were identified. Izano et al. (2019) and Costello et al. (2020) reported updated results of the cohort studies conducted in three automobile manufacturing plants in Michigan (46 316 workers). These reports provide evidence for an association between straight metalworking fluid exposure and colon cancer risk. The corresponding RRs were 2.39 (95% CI, 1.12–5.08) for straight metalworking fluids, 1.43 (95% CI, 0.67–3.04) for soluble metalworking fluids, and 1.08 (95% CI, 0.51–2.30) for synthetic metalworking fluids (Izano et al., 2019). Additionally, a heightened risk of skin and female breast cancers was reported for straight fluids. For the first time, an increased risk of mortality due to stomach cancer was identified. In the highest exposure categories, an HR of 2.13 (95% CI, 1.04–4.39) was observed (Costello et al., 2020).

Colbeth et al. (2023) examined the incidence of 14 types of cancer, with a focus on digestive, respiratory, and hormonal cancers, in the United Auto Workers–General Motors cohort of workers exposed to metalworking fluids (39 132 workers). The main results were an increased incidence of stomach and kidney cancer with higher levels of straight metalworking fluid exposure and an increased incidence of rectal and prostate cancer with increased water-based synthetic metalworking fluid exposure. Only NHL and prostate cancer were associated with soluble metalworking fluid. All results for colon and lung cancers were null.

Park (2018a) estimated aggregate excess lifetime risk, using published findings on exposure–response relations for each cancer site. With a constant workplace metalworking fluid exposure of 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> over 45 years working life, the risk of attributable cancer found was 3.7%.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In a 2-year inhalation study of rats, a proprietary metalworking fluid, TRIM VX, was found to be carcinogenic for lungs in male and female rats, but the evidence was based on the combined occurrences of bronchioloalveolar adenoma or carcinoma of the lung. There was clear evidence of lung carcinogenicity of TRIM VX in male and female mice in a 2-year inhalation study, based on the increased combined incidence of bronchioloalveolar adenoma or carcinoma (primarily carcinoma) of the lung (NTP, 2016e).

Under the conditions of 2-year inhalation studies in male and female rats, there was equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity of CIMSTAR 3800, another metalworking fluid, based on the increased incidence of prostate gland adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in male rats. There was equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity of CIMSTAR 3800 in female rats, based on the incidence of squamous cell papilloma or keratoacanthoma (combined) of the skin and adenocarcinoma or mixed malignant Müllerian tumour (combined) of the uterus. There was no evidence of carcinogenic activity of CIMSTAR 3800 in male mice. There was some evidence of carcinogenic activity of CIMSTAR 3800 in female mice, based on the incidence of follicular cell carcinoma of the thyroid gland and bronchioloalveolar adenoma or carcinoma (combined) of the lung (NTP, 2015).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

TRIM VX showed no evidence of genotoxicity in bacterial mutation tests or in vivo tests for chromosomal damage (micronuclei) (NTP, 2016e). CIMSTAR 3800 was mutagenic in *Escherichia coli* (*E. coli*) strain WP2 *uvrA*/pKM101 in the absence of exogenous metabolic activation (S9); no mutagenic activity was observed in *S. typhimurium* strains TA98 and TA100, with or without S9, or in the *E. coli* strain with S9 (NTP, 2015).

Sauvain et al. (2021) reported that aerosolized metalworking fluids induce oxidative stress, especially for exposure in occupational settings (Sauvain et al., 2021). In male and female F344 rats and male and female B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice exposed to whole-body inhalation of metalworking fluid (concentration, 0–400 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) for 16 weeks, hyperplasia and squamous metaplasia were observed in the respiratory epithelium. In addition, significant increases in chronic active inflammation, histiocytic infiltration, and fibrosis were observed (Ryan et al., 2017). Dermatitis, an immune response reaction, is frequently reported in workers exposed to metalworking fluid (Sauvain et al., 2021). Evidence for genotoxicity of metalworking fluids in humans is sparse and equivocal in rodents.

### Summary

Metalworking fluids are complex mixtures of lubricating fluids, additives, and contaminants. Epidemiological cohort studies provide evidence for a positive association between metalworking fluid exposure and cancers of the breast, bladder, oesophagus, rectum, prostate, larynx, stomach, and kidney. These data could support an evaluation of metalworking fluids by an *IARC Monographs* Working Group. There is evidence that two specific metalworking fluid mixtures induced carcinogenicity in experimental animals. In addition, some mechanistic evidence is reported in humans and in laboratory animals. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of metalworking fluids to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 040 Cleaning products

The Advisory Group considered the agent to be too broadly defined to warrant evaluation.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 041 E-waste work

### Current IARC/WHO classification

E-waste work has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 concluded that e-waste burn sites should not be evaluated, given the heterogeneous nature of the exposure and the possibility that risk assessment based on the individual components based on existing knowledge may be more feasible (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

E-waste can be defined as waste from any electrical or electronic equipment, including all components, subassemblies, and consumables.

About 80% of e-waste from high-income countries is illegally exported to LMICs (including Brazil, China, Ghana, India, Nigeria, and Pakistan), where local workers process the e-waste in recycling shops and sites (Parvez et al., 2021). In the EU, for example, only 3.3 million tons [3.0 million tonnes] of 9.5 million tons [8.6 million tonnes] of e-waste was processed within the EU itself (Scheepers et al., 2021).

Exposure to e-waste has been associated with higher levels of exposure to many toxic substances, including lead, cadmium, mercury, manganese, chromium, nickel, PAHs, polybrominated diphenyl ethers, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), dechlorane plus, polychlorinated dibenzo-*p*-dioxins and furans (PCDD/Fs), new flame retardants, bromophenols, perchlorate, thiocyanate, polybrominated biphenyls,

phthalate esters, bisphenols, and organophosphates (Parvez et al., 2021). However, fewer studies have examined long-term exposures among these workers.

E-waste work activities in modern processes can be categorized as: sorting (either by hand or semi-automated), dismantling (often by hand), shredding and pre-processing (on a belt by electrostatic, density, magnetism, colour separation, etc.), metal processing (melting metals for reuse), and polymer processing (to a granulated material for reuse) (Scheepers et al., 2021). More primitive methods for processing e-waste, resulting in high exposure levels for workers, are observed in the informal sector, on scrap yards. Tasks may involve dismantling of electrical and electronic devices using very basic tools, burning cables and other components using insulating foam from dismantled refrigerators or car tyres, and searching through ashes for valuable metals (Fischer et al., 2020).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in e-waste workers were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No data were available to the Advisory Group pertaining to cancer in experimental animals specifically exposed to e-waste, although studies for specific components of e-waste, many of which have been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, are available.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mechanistic evidence exists for specific agents classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), e.g. cadmium, and benzo[*a*]pyrene (IARC, 2012b, c), and for other agents that have been previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. In addition, numerous studies have investigated the association between exposure to e-waste, including its constituents, and DNA damage.

A systematic review and meta-analysis conducted by Issah et al. (2021) synthesized evidence on DNA damage among e-waste-exposed populations. The review included studies to assess various biomarkers of DNA damage, such as micronuclei, comet assay parameters, 8-OHdG, telomere length, apoptosis rate, and chromosomal aberrations. The meta-analysis revealed a significant increase in DNA damage, particularly in micronuclei frequency, among individuals exposed to e-waste, emphasizing the association between e-waste exposure and genotoxic effects (Issah et al., 2021).

Berame et al. (2020) investigated the presence of micronuclei in exfoliated buccal epithelium cells among e-waste workers in Payatas, the Philippines. The study found a significant association between the length of e-waste exposure and the number of micronuclei, indicating genotoxic damage induced by prolonged exposure to e-waste materials.

Alabi et al. (2020) assessed blood concentrations of lead, nickel, cadmium, and chromium, as well as DNA damage in exfoliated buccal cells of teenage scavengers at an e-waste dumpsite in Lagos, Nigeria. The study found significantly elevated concentrations of these metals in the blood of scavengers, compared with controls, accompanied by increased frequencies of micronuclei and other nuclear abnormalities in buccal cells.

Franco de Diana et al. (2018) investigated genetic damage in women working as waste pickers in a landfill in Paraguay using the comet assay and micronucleus test. The study revealed a significant increase in DNA damage and nuclear alterations among exposed women, compared with controls, indicating the genotoxic effects of occupational exposure to e-waste contaminants.

Brina et al. (2018) evaluated mutagenic and cytotoxic effects in workers involved in the collection and segregation of urban solid waste in southern Brazil, finding significantly higher frequencies of micronuclei and other nuclear abnormalities in exposed workers than in controls, indicating exposure to mutagenic and cytotoxic agents in the workplace.



A study by Zhang et al. (2016b) investigated the effect of elevated lead levels on NK cells in children from an electronic waste recycling area. It was found that increased lead exposure was associated with adverse effects on NK cells, which play a crucial role in the immune system's defence against infections and tumours. This suggests that lead pollution in such areas may compromise children's immune function.

Guo et al. (2020) examined the effect of exposure to PCBs and halogen flame retardants (HFRs) on thyroid hormone-related proteins and gene expression in children living in a Chinese e-waste recycling area. Significant changes were found in these proteins and gene expression, suggesting that PCBs and HFRs may disrupt thyroid hormone regulation in children.

### Summary

No evidence is available regarding cancer in humans occupationally exposed to e-waste, and no evidence is available for cancer in experimental animals. Occupational exposure to e-waste involves the potential for exposure to several agents that have been classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) or *probably* (Group 2A) or *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B). There is mechanistic evidence that humans exposed to e-waste or to some of its major constituents exhibit KCs. One issue is whether exposures are sufficiently homogeneous for a meaningful hazard assessment to be performed that would be representative of a large majority of existing e-waste sites. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of e-waste work to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 042 Laboratory work and occupation as chemist

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Laboratory work and occupation as chemist have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Laboratory work and occupation as chemist were given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Individuals engaged in laboratory work or work as a chemist have employment in diverse laboratory settings. Laboratory workers or chemists may have exposure to known or suspected carcinogens, with substantial heterogeneity in the type and extent of exposure, depending on the type of laboratory work conducted and the context-dependent chemical, biological, or physical hazards involved. One study assessed thyroid exposure to radiation during the production of radiopharmaceuticals, concluding that estimated annual exposure in employees remains within acceptable limits (Wrzesien, 2018). Another study measured thyroid burdens of  $^{125}\text{I}$  in hospital laboratory workers over two decades, revealing varying contamination levels among different personnel categories and a decreasing trend over time, owing to improved working conditions and radiation protection measures (Jönsson and Mattsson, 1998). Contact with potential carcinogens is included in the ILO's international hazard datasheets on occupation for analytical and physical chemists and laboratory workers (ILO, 2012a, b, c).

### Cancer in humans

The identified literature is extensive and includes exposure to a diverse array of laboratory work (e.g. polymer research, chemical manufacture, biomedical sciences), and studies of cancer incidence and cancer mortality are available. Overall, studies on the topic have evaluated varying occupational exposures, which may have differing effects on cancer risk, and thus are challenging to interpret with respect to the composite exposure of laboratory work and occupation as chemist. As an overall limitation, studies generally lacked

information on the exposure–response relations and were prone to healthy worker biases. Few relevant studies have been published since the previous review by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities.

A registry-based study of 15 million people in five Nordic countries identified associations between chemical processing work and selected incident cancers, e.g. of the digestive tract, lung, or cervix (Pukkala et al., 2009). A review reported associations between exposures that may be encountered in laboratory work, and laboratory work itself, with leukaemia (Polychronakis et al., 2013). A subsequent national registry-based study in Brazil noted an elevated (crude) mortality rate ratio for leukaemia for individuals in benzene-exposed occupational groups, including chemists and laboratory assistants (Moura-Corrêa, 2023).

Associations by cancer site and even within cohorts are somewhat inconsistent. For example, an elevated risk of haematolymphoid tumours was observed in a first evaluation in a Swedish cohort study of medical laboratory workers (Gustavsson et al., 1999), but no association was observed on further follow-up (Gustavsson et al., 2017). A higher risk of breast cancer was observed in the earlier study, with attenuated associations in the follow-up study (Gustavsson et al., 1999, 2017). Another study, a case–control analysis, suggested that certain occupational exposures, such as to acrylic and nylon fibres, monoaromatic hydrocarbons, and organic solvents, may increase the risk of postmenopausal breast cancer, particularly for exposures occurring before the age of 36 years (Labrèche et al., 2010). Associations between laboratory-related exposures and breast cancer have been observed in case–control studies. A recent case–control study in Canada estimated occupational exposure to organic solvents, observing an association for select organic solvents and postmenopausal breast cancer (Westra et al., 2023). These findings are in agreement with other case–control studies reporting higher breast cancer risk among women who are occupationally exposed to chemicals (Labrèche et al., 2010; Videnros et al., 2020).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mechanistic data are difficult to describe holistically; however, information on specific agents in the laboratory is informative. For example, increased levels of chromosomal aberrations and DNA damage were found in laboratory workers exposed to formaldehyde, which is classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), and other organic solvents (Souza and Devi, 2014; Costa et al., 2015; de Aquino et al., 2016).

### **Summary**

In summary, the potential for exposure to carcinogenic substances is present for laboratory work and occupation as a chemist; however, the question is whether the exposures are sufficiently homogeneous to be evaluated together. Data from epidemiological studies are most consistent for breast cancer, with additional studies on that cancer site added since the 2019 review. Overall, however, only sparse data on cancer in humans have been added since this topic was reviewed by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities. Mechanistic data concerning these exposures to various agents classified by IARC in laboratory settings can be challenging to describe fully, but specific information on certain agents is available. However, the variety of workplace settings and agents will make it impossible to come to a conclusion for all laboratory workers. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of laboratory work and occupation as chemist is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 043 Occupation as a pesticide applicator

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Occupation as a pesticide applicator has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. This agent was assigned *no priority* for evaluation by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Pesticide applicators are responsible for applying pesticides to crops, gardens, houses, and other areas where pests may be present. Applicators may apply a huge range of pesticides, including herbicides, insecticides, fungicides, nematicides, and rodenticides, as well as bactericides, algicides, and virucides. WHO (2020b) states that over 1000 different pesticides are used around the world, and the European Commission (2024.) database lists nearly 1500 active substances, safeners, and synergists.

Pesticide applicators use a wide range of application methods, including spraying, injecting, and laying baits. Spraying may be from aircraft, from tractors or other farm machinery, or using a backpack or hand-held spray. A wide variation in the use of control measures is also seen, with particularly high levels of exposures and low use of controls in countries with lower socioeconomic status.

### Cancer in humans

Many studies are available on exposure to individual pesticides and different types of cancer, with a PubMed search for this agent identifying over 3000 articles. A PubMed search for “pesticides” AND “cancer” discloses more than 11 000 papers on this topic. Of these, there are 138 meta-analyses and a further 75 systematic reviews, half of them published in the past 5 years. However, not all of these will be specifically relevant to occupational exposure as a pesticide sprayer. One recent meta-analysis of occupational exposure and NHL concluded that occupational exposures to various hazards, including pesticide occupation, were associated with an increased risk of NHL but did not provide a meta-estimate (Francisco et al., 2023). There are challenges in interpreting the literature on general occupational exposure to pesticides, given the heterogeneous nature of the exposure and the pesticides.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic evidence in exposed humans is available from studies of individual compounds or for mixed exposures.

Gómez-Martín et al. (2015) investigated occupational exposure to pesticides and found an elevation in *N*<sup>7</sup>-methyldeoxyguanosine DNA adducts in individuals exposed to these chemicals, potentially leading to mutations, and genomic instability, contributing to carcinogenesis. The study also highlighted the influence of genetic polymorphisms in such enzymes as paraoxonase-1 (PON1) and glutathione-S-transferase (GST), which play crucial roles in detoxification pathways.

Usman et al. (2022) reviewed the association between GSTM1/GSTT1 null genotypes and cancer risk among pesticide workers. They highlighted an increased susceptibility to adverse health effects, owing to the absence of key xenobiotic metabolizing enzymes, although some individuals with null genotypes do not exhibit susceptibility. Pesticides, exacerbated by null GSTT1/GSTM1 genotypes, induce genotoxicity and cancer through mechanisms involving oxidative stress and miRNA dysregulation. Sherif et al. (2023) conducted a systematic review and meta-analysis to assess the genotoxic effects of agricultural pesticide exposure among workers in Arabic countries. Results indicated a higher level of DNA damage in exposed

individuals, emphasizing the need for further research to elucidate the genotoxic effects of occupational pesticide exposure in the Middle East.

Lucio et al. (2023) conducted a study in Brazil demonstrating genetic instability in farmers using pesticides, as evidenced by a combination of alkaline comet and micronucleus assays. Similarly, Kaur and Kaur (2018) discussed how impaired DNA repair mechanisms, often compromised by pesticide exposure, can lead to the accumulation of DNA damage, increasing the risk of cancer development over time. Dos Santos et al. (2022) assessed genomic instability and telomere length in Brazilian family farmers exposed to pesticides and found evidence of genomic instability using the buccal micronucleus cytome (BMCyt) assay, a technique that detects DNA damage, in pesticide-exposed farmers. Additionally, telomere length, which is associated with cellular ageing and genomic stability, may be affected by pesticide exposure, suggesting a potential biomarker for assessing the effect of pesticides on genomic health.

Benedetti et al. (2018) investigated DNA damage and epigenetic alterations in soybean farmers exposed to a complex mixture of pesticides. They found evidence of both DNA damage and epigenetic changes in exposed individuals, suggesting that pesticide exposure may induce genetic and epigenetic modifications that could contribute to adverse health effects. This study emphasizes the importance of understanding the molecular mechanisms underlying the toxicity of pesticide mixtures. Jiménez-Garza et al. (2023) reviewed DNA methylation modifications in blood cells from workers exposed to toxic agents. Findings suggested global hypomethylation and promoter hypermethylation in exposed groups, highlighting the importance of epigenetic mechanisms in pesticide-induced toxicity.

Pesticide exposure is known to induce oxidative stress, a condition characterized by an imbalance between ROS production and the body's antioxidant defence mechanisms. Ledda et al. (2021) and Hilgert Jacobsen-Pereira et al. (2018) both observed elevated levels of oxidative stress markers and DNA damage in agricultural workers after pesticide exposure. Kisby et al. (2009) also reported similar findings, further emphasizing the role of oxidative stress in pesticide-related carcinogenesis. Barbosa de Sousa et al. (2023) investigated mitochondrial DNA copy number variation in Brazilian farmers occupationally exposed to pesticides. Mitochondrial dysfunction has been implicated in pesticide-induced toxicity, and alterations in mitochondrial DNA copy number may reflect cellular responses to pesticide exposure. Understanding mitochondrial dysfunction in pesticide-exposed populations can provide insights into the mechanisms underlying pesticide toxicity and associated health outcomes.

Chronic inflammation has been implicated as a contributing factor in various cancers, and pesticide exposure can exacerbate inflammatory processes in the body. Zanchi et al. (2024) found a link between redox imbalance, inflammation, and an increased risk of depression in Brazilian pesticide-exposed farmers. Additionally, Ramos et al. (2021) documented multibiomarker responses indicative of inflammation in an agricultural population from central Brazil, further supporting the association between pesticide exposure and chronic inflammation.

Lerro et al. (2018a) reported an association between occupational pesticide exposure and subclinical hypothyroidism. Similarly, Blanco-Muñoz et al. (2016) found alterations in thyroid hormone levels in floriculture workers exposed to organochlorine pesticides, suggesting disruption of the endocrine function. Moreover, Mardhiyah et al. (2021) observed differences in thyroid hormone levels between female farmers and non-farmers in Indonesia, further implicating pesticide exposure in endocrine dysfunction and potentially cancer development.

Andreotti et al. (2015) investigated the effect of pesticide use on leukocyte telomere length, a marker of cellular ageing and immortalization. Their study found a correlation between pesticide exposure and shorter leukocyte telomeres, suggesting a potential mechanism by which pesticides might promote cellular immortalization and contribute to carcinogenesis.

## Summary

Pesticide applicators are exposed to a myriad of toxic substances during their work. These pesticide-specific exposures have been linked to an increased risk of cancer through several key mechanisms, as elucidated by recent research. Studies of mechanistic end-points in pesticide applicators have found some evidence of KCs, including DNA damage, genomic instability, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, receptor-mediated effects, and immortalization. However, given the complex mixture of pesticides and different mechanisms, it will be difficult to give a uniform evaluation on carcinogenic hazard for pesticide applicators in general. The rationale for evaluating pesticide applicators as an occupation is not clear, given that a number of specific pesticides and their active ingredients have already been evaluated or are prioritized for future evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* programme (including many described in the present report). The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of occupation as a pesticide applicator is unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 044 Semiconductor industry work

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Semiconductor industry work has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Working in the semiconductor industry was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Individuals working in the semiconductor industry have heterogeneous levels of exposure to a variety of hazardous chemicals, as well as sources of ionizing and non-ionizing radiation. Production processes and involved chemicals may be trade secrets (Choi et al., 2018; Kim et al., 2018c), and exposures change over time, owing to advances in technology (Choi et al., 2018), representing a challenge in exposure characterization. Issues with exposure characterization have been noted in epidemiological studies on semiconductor workers (Park, 2018b).

A cross-sectional study of semiconductor workers in the Republic of Korea identified elevated levels of exposure to some agents, such as solvents, shift work, and heavy metals (Kim et al., 2022a); the influence of non-occupational exposure could not be excluded for some of these agents.

### Cancer in humans

Reviews of the epidemiological literature (Kim et al., 2014a, 2022b) and more recently published studies (Rodrigues et al., 2020; Lee et al., 2023b) have reported excess cancer incidence or mortality among workers for various sites including brain and breast, and for haematolymphoid cancers. The human cancer data published since 2019 are sparse. Of the more recently published studies, one nested case–control study in the USA included 120 cases of cancer of the CNS, with somewhat inconsistent results by facility location (Rodrigues et al., 2020), and a retrospective cohort in the Republic of Korea reported significantly higher excess deaths from lymphohaematopoietic cancers and leukaemia only among female operators (Lee et al., 2023b).

On balance, previous studies are generally limited by such issues as inadequate exposure characterization, minimal control for confounding factors, and potential lack of comparability between comparison groups (i.e. healthy worker biases).

Few studies evaluated exposure–response associations (Kim et al., 2014a). A recent case–control study considered cumulative exposure by job group and cancers of the CNS, including the brain (Rodrigues et al.,

2020). Significant trends or associations were noted for select chemicals across tertiles of exposure, including agents already classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), as well as others (e.g. molybdenum) classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) or (e.g. 2-butoxyethanol, cyclohexanone, orthodichlorobenzene) evaluated as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mechanistic data for semiconductor exposure as a whole are not widely available; however, studies on specific agents used in semiconductor manufacturing may be informative. One study reported evidence of increased frequency of micronuclei in lymphocytes in semiconductor workers in Germany exposed to boron trifluoride and boron trichloride, compared with non-exposed semiconductor workers. In replicate analysis, the difference disappeared after the implementation of protective measures for reducing exposures, described only as “complex mixtures of chemical waste products” (Winker et al., 2008). Studies by Yoon et al. (2020) and Song et al. (2022a) emphasized the presence of such carcinogenic materials as sulfuric acid, chromic acid, ethylene oxide, crystalline silica, potassium dichromate, and formaldehyde in semiconductor manufacturing, as well as occupational exposure to refractory ceramic fibres (RCFs) during maintenance activities.

Epidemiological investigations by Rodrigues et al. (2020) found positive associations between cancers of the CNS, including the brain, and specific operations and chemicals in semiconductor facilities. Despite a decrease in mean exposures to carcinogens over time, workers remain at risk during certain operations, as demonstrated by Rodrigues et al. (2019) and Park et al. (2011).

Mechanistically, the carcinogenicity of semiconductor-related compounds, such as indium phosphide and indium oxide, involve oxidative stress, inflammation, genotoxicity, and interference with DNA repair mechanisms (NTP, 2001; Bomhard, 2018). Additionally, exposure to RCFs can induce chronic inflammation, fibrosis, and oxidative stress, leading to DNA damage and carcinogenesis (Song et al., 2022a).

In a study designed to characterize the genotoxic effects of a complex mixture of perhalogenated hydrocarbons, genotoxic effects were associated with exposure to this mixture, indicating potential DNA damage (Müller et al., 2002). In addition, Bustamante et al. (1997) investigated the effects of semiconductor agents arsenic and indium on rat thymocytes. The researchers found that both arsenic and indium induced apoptosis (programmed cell death) in the thymocytes.

### **Summary**

Epidemiological investigations have highlighted positive associations between certain operations and chemicals in semiconductor facilities and cancers of the CNS, including the brain.

There is some mechanistic evidence that occupational exposure in the semiconductor industry exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, alteration of DNA repair, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation. However, an evaluation of carcinogenicity would be extremely challenging, owing to the heterogeneity of exposure and changes in the exposure over time. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of semiconductor industry work to be unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 045 Textile manufacturing industry work

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Textile manufacturing industry work has been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 48 in 1989 (IARC, 1990b), and was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancers of the nasal cavity and bladder in humans.

### Exposure characterization

The global fashion and furnishing industries employ more than 75 million workers worldwide. Most of these industries are located in parts of the world, especially LMICs, where occupational health legislation may be weak or non-existent. Textile manufacturing workers produce textiles of all types, with the exposure consisting of inhalation of cotton dust and other types of dust, including from silk, wool, and a wide array of synthetic fibres. Textile workers are also exposed to a variety of dyes, solvents, mineral oils, and other chemicals (IARC, 1990b; Singh and Chadha, 2015, 2016). Historically, there has also been exposure to asbestos fibres (Deng et al., 2012).

### Cancer in humans

Numerous occupational epidemiology studies have been conducted among textile workers in different countries around the world. *IARC Monographs* Volume 48 (IARC, 1990b) outlines dozens of studies among textile workers. A large number of these studies have been summarized in one extensive review (Singh and Chadha, 2016).

In the previous evaluation, the evidence was found to be *limited* for cancers of the nasal cavity and bladder. Although consistent positive associations were seen in several studies, there were concerns about confounding by other causes of these cancers. Few studies of sinonasal cancer among textile workers have been published since *IARC Monographs* Volume 48 (IARC, 1990b). A hospital-based case–control study in France observed a positive association between sinonasal cancer and textile dust exposure among women; it was not possible to separate the effects of wood dust from those of textile dust among men (Luce et al., 1997). Textile workers were found to be at increased risk of nasal cancer in a small, population-based case–control study (Teschke et al., 1997). In a national surveillance system in Italy, some patients with sinonasal cancer were found to have been exposed to textile dusts (Binazzi et al., 2018).

In the most recent IARC evaluation (IARC, 1990b), there were five case–control studies among textile dyers, all of which showed elevated risks of bladder cancer. Since then, a possible association of textile production work with bladder cancer has been investigated in cohort or population-based case–control studies (e.g. Zheng et al., 1992; Serra et al., 2000, 2008; Reulen et al., 2007; Colt et al., 2011). One motivation was the use of dyes derived from aromatic amines. These studies have also observed an increased risk of bladder cancer in various subgroups of textile workers (e.g. weavers and winding, warping, or sizing workers; Serra et al., 2008), although the possibility that risk factors other than dye-related aromatic amines were involved in at least some of these studies could not be excluded. Notably Colt et al. (2011), who controlled well for smoking and other occupational risk factors, observed an OR of 2.0 (95% CI, 1.2–3.3;  $P_{\text{duration trend}} = 0.0013$ ) among male textile and leather machine operators.

Several studies focused on the risk of lung cancer since the previous evaluation. A case–control study in India found a higher risk of lung cancer among male textile workers, controlling for smoking (Notani et al., 1993). In some cohorts, it was identified that workers had been exposed to asbestos fibres, owing to the type of textile produced or the technology used in the industry, or both (Deng et al., 2012; Elliott et al., 2012; Wang et al., 2012). Many studies focused specifically on endotoxin exposure among workers handling cotton fibres (e.g. Astrakianakis et al., 2007; Fang et al., 2013). For example, a study in female textile

workers in Shanghai found an inverse relation between lung cancer risk and cumulative endotoxin exposure that occurred 20 years or more before the onset of risk (Agalliu et al., 2011). This suggests a possible early anti-carcinogenic effect of endotoxin exposure. However, the association between lung cancer and endotoxin exposure accumulated in more recent windows (< 20 years before risk) was weaker and not statistically significant, indicating the importance of temporal aspects in understanding carcinogenic mechanisms in textile manufacturing (Applebaum et al., 2013). In a large case–cohort study conducted among women textile workers in Shanghai, which carefully reconstructed exposures to chemicals and particles, some evidence was seen of a positive association of lung cancer with silica dust and formaldehyde among the small percentage of women exposed to these agents (Checkoway et al., 2011).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies on exposure through working in the textile-manufacturing industry and cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group, but carcinogenicity studies are available for some individual exposure types in the textile manufacturing industry.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Textile workers are frequently exposed to a wide range of agents, including aromatic amines, PAHs, formaldehyde, particulate matter, asbestos, and NSW. Several of these have already been classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) or *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1). All of them have been shown to exhibit several of the KCs. Mechanistic evidence of the KCs for occupational exposure in a textile factory in exposed humans is not extensive.

In a cross-sectional study, Fanlo et al. (2004) observed a significant increase of urinary mutagenicity in 117 workers in a textile factory, mainly exposed to dyes, compared with matched 117 non-exposed workers. A similar increase of urinary mutagenicity was observed in 70 textile workers exposed mainly to arylamines, compared with control non-exposed workers (Sinués et al., 1992). In a biomonitoring study conducted in Türkiye, Diler and Çelik (2011) observed a significant increase of micronuclei frequency in buccal mucosa cells collected from a group of 50 carpet fabric workers (25 smokers and 25 non-smokers), compared with controls. Similar genotoxicity damage, by means of increased micronuclei frequency, was observed in PBLs collected from workers at a textile painting factory in southern India (Sellappa et al., 2010).

More recently, in a pre- and post-test randomized experimental control trial, Prasetyo et al. (2019) observed significant decreases in immunoglobulin A (IgA) levels and pulmonary function, markers of altered inflammatory response, in a group of 30 young healthy workers from a textile company in Indonesia. Levels of IgA were increased after the use of protective masks.

### **Summary**

Several new human cancer studies since the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation show an association between exposure from work in the textile manufacturing industry and cancers of the sinonasal cavity, urinary bladder, and lung. No evidence is available for cancer in experimental animals. There is some evidence that occupational exposure in a textile factory might be associated with the KCs, including genotoxicity and chronic inflammation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of textile manufacturing industry (work in) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)



## 046 Outdoor air pollution

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Outdoor air pollution and particulate matter in outdoor air pollution were previously classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 109 in 2013 (IARC, 2015). There is *sufficient* evidence that these two agents cause lung cancer in humans, and *limited* evidence that outdoor air pollution causes bladder cancer. Outdoor air pollution was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Air pollution has been defined as the presence of one or several substances (e.g. NO<sub>2</sub>, particulate matter of aerodynamic diameter < 2.5 µm (PM<sub>2.5</sub>), ozone, soot, ultrafine particles, diesel engine exhaust, benzene and other volatile organic compounds) in air at a concentration or duration above natural levels, with the potential to cause an adverse effect (IARC, 2015). As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), outdoor air pollution exposure remains widespread globally, with both anthropogenic sources (e.g. industrial, transportation, domestic, agricultural) and human-enhanced natural sources (e.g. increasing wildfires due to climate change). In 2021, WHO published a major revision of its air quality guidelines since the previous evaluation in 2005; the guideline level for PM<sub>2.5</sub> was reduced from 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> to 5 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (WHO, 2021b). The new guideline notes that air quality has improved in most high-income countries since the 1990s, but that there has been deterioration in most LMICs.

### Cancer in humans

Evidence for cancer sites in addition to the lung has been examined extensively since the previous evaluation of outdoor air pollution (IARC, 2015). In a pooled analysis of six European cohorts, some components of outdoor air pollution (i.e. PM<sub>2.5</sub>, soot, NO<sub>2</sub>) showed positive but imprecise associations with cancer of the intracranial CNS (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2023). A separate meta-analysis also estimated positive but imprecise associations between PM<sub>2.5</sub> and adult brain tumours but found stronger associations for soot and NO<sub>2</sub> (Shen et al., 2023). A meta-analysis of 13 studies (mainly of cohorts) observed an association between PM<sub>2.5</sub> and cancers of the liver (meta-RR, 1.31; 95% CI, 1.07–1.56) and colorectum (meta-RR, 1.35; 95% CI, 1.08–1.62), with most studies evaluated as having a “probably low” risk of bias (Pritchett et al., 2022).

A meta-analysis found meta-RRs of 1.03 per 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> change in PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure for breast cancer incidence (95% CI, 0.93–1.13) and 1.18 per 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> change in PM<sub>2.5</sub> exposure for mortality (95% CI, 0.81–1.73) (Yu et al., 2021b). Two other meta-analyses found stronger associations with breast cancer for NO<sub>2</sub> than for PM<sub>2.5</sub> (Gabet et al., 2021; Wei et al., 2021a). For cancers of bladder (mortality) and kidney (incidence), a systematic review found that most of the studies identified observed positive associations, although many were imprecise, and differences in study metrics precluded meta-estimation (Zare Sakhvidi et al., 2020). Adequacy of control for confounding was a concern in these studies. A large, well-conducted study observed null associations for bladder cancer incidence and PM<sub>2.5</sub> (Pedersen et al., 2018).

A meta-analysis was conducted for metrics of outdoor air pollution and childhood leukaemia (Filippini et al., 2019). Only 3 of 29 studies included measures of PM<sub>2.5</sub>, and no meta-estimate was provided. Most of the studies used indirect metrics, such as traffic count, road density, or distance from a major road. The meta-RR for traffic density (highest compared with lowest category) was 1.09 (95% CI, 1.00–1.20). For benzene exposure, which was estimated in seven of the studies, the meta-RR for all childhood leukaemia was 1.27 (95% CI, 1.03–1.56) and was higher for AML (meta-RR, 1.84; 95% CI, 1.31–2.59).

## Summary

For several cancer types, including cancers of the breast, liver, and colorectum, there appears to be increasing evidence of an association with outdoor air pollution and particulate matter in outdoor air pollution. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of outdoor air pollution to be warranted. It may be efficient to conduct such an evaluation in conjunction with other metrics of air pollution (e.g. NO<sub>2</sub>, soot, ultrafine particulates, combustion of biomass, ozone), some of which are described elsewhere in the present report (agents 047–050).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 047 Indoor and outdoor combustion of biomass

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Indoor emissions from household combustion of biomass have been classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 95 in 2006 (IARC, 2010e), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (specifically, lung cancer) and *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity of wood smoke extracts in experimental animals. Outdoor emissions from combustion of biomass have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme, although outdoor air pollution and particulate matter in outdoor air pollution were classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 109 in 2013 (IARC, 2015). Combustion of biomass was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new evidence of lung cancer in humans from indoor sources of biomass combustion.

### Exposure characterization

Combustion of biomass includes burning of wood, branches, twigs, and dung (IARC, 2010e). As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a):

These fuels are used by about half of the world's population, primarily in low- and middle-income countries, for cooking and heating, often in poorly ventilated spaces (Rehfuess et al., 2006). Products of incomplete combustion contain respirable particles and many volatile and non-volatile organic compounds, including carcinogens such as benzo[*a*]pyrene, formaldehyde, and benzene.

The highest levels of PM<sub>2.5</sub> have been found in houses with older wood stoves (Fleisch et al., 2020). Women and young children who are most often at home may be the highest exposed to indoor sources of biomass combustion (IARC, 2010e).

Outdoor exposure to biomass combustion is also largely due to wood smoke, which contributes 56–77% of particulate matter (PM) levels during the winter in some areas in Canada (Ward and Lange, 2010). In Asia, smoke haze from vegetation and peatland fires is a serious problem, with the smoke, consisting of a complex mix of chemicals, often resulting in unhealthy air quality for long periods of time (Phung et al., 2022a). Wildfires are another major contributor to outdoor exposure, both for the general population and as occupational exposure of wildland firefighters (IARC, 2023a).

### Cancer in humans

The 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a) noted:

A meta-analysis including 14 case–control studies of biomass cooking or heating reported [an OR] for lung cancer risk of 1.17 (95% CI, 1.01–

1.37) with biomass for cooking and/or heating overall [...] (Bruce et al., 2015). Sensitivity analyses restricted to studies with adequate adjustments for potential confounders and a clean-fuel reference category resulted in ORs of 1.21 (95% CI, 1.05–1.39) for men and 1.95 (95% CI, 1.16–3.27) for women. Exposure–response relationships were observed for men, and higher risk was found for women in low- and middle-income countries than for those in high-income countries.

Since then, various new studies have been published. A recent study in the USA showed an increased risk of lung cancer among women who used a wood-burning fireplace or stove for  $\geq 30$  days/year (HR, 1.68; 95% CI, 1.27–2.20) compared with women who did not use a wood-burning fireplace or stove (Mehta et al., 2023). This association remained for women who had never smoked. A case–control study also reported an association between indoor wood smoke exposure and lung cancer, for which the risk was higher for more hours of exposure per year (Báez-Saldaña et al., 2021). In *IARC Monographs* Volume 132 (IARC, 2023a), a few studies of cancer in humans included wildland firefighters.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Few carcinogenicity study data from experimental animals are available. In a study in China by Liang et al. (1988), in which mice and rats were exposed to natural wood smoke, there was a significant increase in the incidence of lung tumours in rats. Mumford et al. (1990) demonstrated the incidence of skin tumours after 77 weeks in SENCAR mice exposed to extracts from indoor air pollutants from wood combustion. The Advisory Group considered that there are limitations in the aforementioned bioassays to be considered in evaluating the carcinogenicity of biomass combustion.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

One study found high potency of air extracts to induce sustained levels of cellular stress, including oxidative stress, genotoxicity, DNA damage response, and proinflammatory signalling (de Oliveira Galvão et al., 2020). Combustion-derived particles from biomass sources have been found to promote epithelial-to-mesenchymal transition in human lung A549 cells (Marchetti et al., 2021). In the same cell line, inflammatory responses, as measured by the production of IL-6, IL-8, and TNF $\alpha$ , were observed after exposure to particles of wood combustion (Karlsson et al., 2006). Additionally, solid fuel combustion emissions increased the generation of ROS in human ocular cell lines (Karakoçak et al., 2019). Long-term exposure to indoor biomass smoke was shown to cause DNA damage in airway cells and oxidative stress, micronucleus formation, and chromosomal aberrations in PBLs in exposed humans, (Mumford et al., 1993; Musthapa et al., 2004; Mondal et al., 2010; Mukherjee et al., 2013). In CHO cells, a dose–response increase in SCE was observed for exposure to wood smoke (Hytönen et al., 1983; Salomaa et al., 1985). In mouse macrophages (RAW264.7 cells), exposure to wood smoke led to increased levels of lipid peroxidation, activation of inflammatory and immune responses, and DNA damage through the generation of ROS (Leonard et al., 2000).

When biomass materials are burnt, they release a variety of pollutants, including mutagenic and carcinogenic compounds, such as PAHs. Combustion biomass materials may exhibit KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation, particularly in the lungs and possibly in other organs (Alfheim and Ramdahl, 1984; Bell and Kamens, 1990; Mutlu et al., 2016; Champion et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

There appears to be growing evidence of an association between exposure to combustion of biomass indoors and risk of lung cancer in humans, which could support an evaluation of whether there is now *sufficient* evidence for lung cancer in humans. Little evidence is available from animal studies for

combustion of biomass and carcinogenicity. However, there are some reports of genotoxic effects, immunomodulation, and inflammatory response owing to exposure to particles from indoor biomass combustion in exposed humans, and for wood smoke for human cell lines, in bacterial systems, and in rodents.

The emerging new human cancer evidence and mechanistic evidence in exposed humans supports a re-evaluation of this agent, previously classified in IARC Group 2A. For outdoor air combustion, the human cancer evidence is sparse. The mechanistic evidence in experimental systems and mechanistic studies in wildland firefighters may be relevant to this agent. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of these agents to be warranted. In the interest of efficiency, it may be useful to combine these two agents in an evaluation. These two agents may be considered with outdoor air pollution (agent 046) in a future meeting.

#### **Recommendations**

Indoor biomass combustion: High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

Outdoor biomass combustion: Medium priority

## **048 Ultrafine particles**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Ultrafine particles (UFPs) have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. However, particulate matter in outdoor air pollution (without specification of size) was classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 109 in 2013 (IARC, 2015).

### **Exposure characterization**

UFPs are less than 100 nm in diameter and are also denoted PM<sub>0.1</sub> (Schraufnagel, 2020). UFPs can originate from both natural sources (e.g. volcanoes, wildfires) and anthropogenic sources (e.g. traffic, industrial emissions) (Li et al., 2016a). Exposure to UFPs occurs primarily via general air pollution, as well as in occupational settings.

Since UFPs are an important component of traffic-related air pollution, many people are exposed, but UFPs have a large variation on a fine spatial scale. For example, models in the Netherlands estimated levels from 7691 particles/cm<sup>3</sup> for the 1st percentile to 23 390 particles/cm<sup>3</sup> for the 99th percentile (Bouma et al., 2023). Across the continental USA, estimated levels ranged from 1808 to 20 896 particles/cm<sup>3</sup> (Pond et al., 2022).

In occupational settings, exposure to UFPs mainly occurs after high-temperature and mechanical treatments of materials, owing to unintentional heating of semi-volatile materials, or to combustion processes (Manigrasso et al., 2019). Highest concentrations of PM<sub>0.1</sub> have been observed in welding facilities, machine shops, basic metal industries, traffic-related occupations, and restaurants, with concentrations of 0.7–4.7 × 10<sup>6</sup> particles/cm<sup>3</sup>, 60–450 times as high as background levels (Viitanen et al., 2017).

### **Cancer in humans**

In a US cohort, UFPs were significantly associated with all-cancer mortality in single-pollutant models, but risk estimates became insignificant after controlling for PM<sub>2.5</sub> or NO<sub>2</sub> (Pond et al., 2022). In a Dutch national cohort study on long-term exposure to UFPs (Bouma et al., 2023), a significant association was found between annual average UFP exposure and lung cancer mortality, with an HR of 1.038 (95% CI, 1.028–1.048). In two-pollutant models, this association was attenuated but remained significant. Similarly, a study in California (Jones et al., 2023a), USA, evaluating long-term outdoor UFP exposure and lung cancer risk, found a modest association for lung cancer overall. In analyses by histological subtype, an increased

risk of adenocarcinoma was observed among men, but not women. A Canadian study on childhood cancer (Lavigne et al., 2020) found that exposure to UFPs during the first trimester of pregnancy was positively associated with overall cancer incidence diagnosed before the age of 6 years after adjusting for PM<sub>2.5</sub>, NO<sub>2</sub>, and for personal- and neighbourhood-level covariates. An HR per 10 000/cm<sup>3</sup> increase of 1.13 (95% CI, 1.03–1.22) was reported.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

UFPs from domestic wood stoves have been shown to be genotoxic, increasing DNA damage in human lung carcinoma A549 cells (Marabini et al., 2017). However, UFPs from an urban area in Malaysia tested negative in the Ames test, both without and with metabolic activation (Siew et al., 2023). UFPs have been associated with inflammatory responses in exposed humans (Ohlwein et al., 2019). In human primary monocytes, exposure to UFPs resulted in increased oxidative stress and a dose-dependent increase in the release of proinflammatory cytokines, such as TNF $\alpha$ , that could also affect the immune response (Bliss et al., 2018). Wei et al. (2016) have shown that UFPs affect both cell proliferation and DNA methylation (epigenetic changes) in human neuronal cell line SH-SY5Y (Wei et al., 2016).

Organic UFPs containing PAHs increased oxidative stress in human BEAS-2B bronchial epithelial cells in an air–liquid interface model (Juarez Facio et al., 2022). Ultrafine dusts induced DNA damage in rat lungs (Rittinghausen et al., 2013). In vitro studies have consistently shown that UFPs induce a pulmonary inflammatory response, and in vivo studies have demonstrated that UFPs lead to proinflammatory and cellular responses related to oxidative stress (Oberdörster et al., 2005). Suggested mechanisms by which UFPs induce lung diseases include the induction of oxidative stress and both innate and adaptive immune responses (Leikauf et al., 2020).

### **Summary**

There appears to be a growing body of evidence for an association between exposure to ultrafine particles and risk of cancer, principally lung cancer. These studies involve several correlated exposures, including to PM<sub>2.5</sub> and other components of air pollution. There are no data in experimental animals for UFP carcinogenicity. Mechanistic evidence is available for some of the KCs, including cell proliferation, oxidative stress, and inflammation in exposed humans, human primary cells, and experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ultrafine particulates to be warranted and recommended its evaluation together with other agents related to air pollution (e.g. ozone, nitrogen dioxide, or combustion of biomass).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## **049 Nitrogen dioxide (CAS No. 10102-44-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Nitrogen dioxide (NO<sub>2</sub>) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. NO<sub>2</sub> is a component of diesel and gasoline engine exhausts, and of outdoor air pollution, all of which have been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

NO<sub>2</sub> was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of emerging epidemiological evidence for a causal role in cancers of lung and breast, and of mechanistic evidence.

## Exposure characterization

As reported by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), “NO<sub>2</sub> is emitted from fossil fuel combustion, microbial activity, biomass burning, and oxidation of nitrous oxide. Globally, NO<sub>2</sub> concentrations increase in proportion to the population raised to an exponent that varies by region (Lamsal et al., 2013).” NO<sub>2</sub> is one of the major components of air pollution, which are moderately to highly correlated (Stafoggia et al., 2022). NO<sub>2</sub> is often used as a proxy for exposure to traffic-related air pollution (Hamra et al., 2015). Exposure contrasts exist geographically across the globe, as well as, at a smaller scale, within cities. The exposure concentrations vary by the route one takes, or the mode of transport. For example, cyclists and pedestrians are exposed to compositions of outdoor air pollution that differ from those to which car occupants or bus riders are exposed (Tainio et al., 2021).

## Cancer in humans

The association between increasing exposure to NO<sub>2</sub> and mortality or morbidity from lung cancer, breast cancer, and other cancer types has been evaluated in a growing number of epidemiological studies, including long-term cohort and case–control studies. A meta-analysis of 16 cohorts found an HR for lung cancer mortality of 1.05 (95% CI, 1.02–1.08) per 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> increment in NO<sub>2</sub> (Atkinson et al., 2018). A recent study in seven European cohorts gave an HR of 1.093 (95% CI, 1.053–1.134) for lung cancer mortality per increment of 10 µg/m<sup>3</sup> NO<sub>2</sub> (Stafoggia et al., 2022).

A review of eight case–control studies and nine cohort studies saw more consistent findings for elevated NO<sub>2</sub> and risk of breast cancer (White et al., 2018), which was also supported by more recent studies (Goldberg et al., 2019; Amadou et al., 2023). A few studies suggested a potentially increasing risk of non-melanoma skin cancer, cancers of the mouth and throat, and brain tumours (Jørgensen et al., 2016; Datzmann et al., 2018).

The correlations between air pollutants make it difficult to identify independent effects. For example, in two-pollutant models in the seven European cohorts, only for PM<sub>2.5</sub> was a consistent positive association with incidence of lung cancer observed, whereas no association with NO<sub>2</sub> was observed (Brunekreef et al., 2021).

## Cancer in experimental animals

In a mid-term inhalation carcinogenicity study (26 weeks) using p53-knockout mice, there was equivocal evidence of lung carcinogenicity in male mice, with an increased trend in the incidence of lung adenoma at the highest concentration (40 ppm) in male mice. No carcinogenicity was observed in female mice (JBRC, 2019a). In another mid-term inhalation carcinogenicity study (26 weeks), using rasH2 mice, there was equivocal evidence of spleen carcinogenicity in male mice, with an increased trend in the incidence of haemangioma and haemangiosarcoma (combined) in the spleen at the highest concentration (40 ppm) in male mice. No carcinogenicity was observed in female mice (JBRC, 2019b).

## Mechanistic evidence

Positive findings have been obtained for NO<sub>2</sub> in various in vitro genotoxic assays (Victorin, 1994; Koehler et al., 2011). At urban-relevant concentrations, NO<sub>2</sub> induced micronucleus formation and DNA fragmentation in human nasal epithelium cells from donors (Koehler et al., 2010; Koehler et al., 2013). Inhalation of NO<sub>2</sub> led to chromosome aberrations and mutations in lung cells in rats (Isomura et al., 1984). Additionally, inhalation exposure of rats to NO<sub>2</sub> caused DNA strand breakage and the formation of DNA–protein crosslinks in cells from various internal organs, as well as a noticeable increase in micronucleus frequency in the bone marrow cells of rats (Han et al., 2013).

## Summary

There appears to be growing epidemiological evidence of an association between exposure to NO<sub>2</sub> and risk of various cancers in humans, including cancer of the lung and breast. Exposures to other components of air pollution make it difficult to evaluate NO<sub>2</sub> separately. A careful evaluation of the quality (including exposure assessment) and informativeness of the studies would be warranted to determine whether there is *sufficient* or *limited* evidence for the carcinogenicity of NO<sub>2</sub>.

There is some evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of NO<sub>2</sub>; however, it is limited to only a single species and a single sex.

There is mechanistic evidence related to the KCs, including genotoxicity for NO<sub>2</sub> in exposed humans and in experimental systems. On the basis of the available information, the Advisory Group recommends the evaluation of carcinogenicity of NO<sub>2</sub> and suggests evaluating it together with other agents related to air pollution (e.g. ozone, ultrafine particles).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 050 Ozone (CAS No. 10028-15-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Ozone (O<sub>3</sub>) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Ozone was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of bioassay and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Ozone is listed by the OECD as a high production volume chemical (OECD, 2007).

Ozone is an important gaseous component of the mixture of air pollutants; it is formed in a chemical reaction involving solar radiation and ozone precursors (volatile organic compounds, CO, NO<sub>x</sub>, CH<sub>4</sub>) (The Royal Society, 2008). Ozone is produced naturally, and pre-industrial levels are estimated to have been approximately 30 µg/m<sup>3</sup>. Background levels are now about twice that (IARC, 2015). Ozone concentrations can change according to the weather and can peak during heat waves (The Royal Society, 2008; de Hoogh et al., 2018). There is also spatial variability, for example with estimated concentrations ranging from < 75 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in northern Europe to > 110 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in southern Europe (de Hoogh et al., 2018). Ozone exposure as a component of air pollution is also described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 109 (IARC, 2015). In urban areas with photochemical pollution, ozone levels probably reached levels greater than 1000 µg/m<sup>3</sup> in Los Angeles, USA, in the 1970s, but current levels in urban areas are lower, e.g. with summertime peaks of less than or approximately 400 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (IARC, 2015). Ozone generators used as air purifiers for the removal of bioaerosols, which gained interest after the COVID-19 pandemic despite a lack of clarity over their effectiveness, may be an indoor air pollution source of ozone (Kakaei et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

Available informative studies are cohort studies examining cancer risk associated with components of air pollution. The US EPA Integrated Science Assessment (ISA) (US EPA, 2013a) concluded that there was inadequate evidence for a causal relation between ozone and cancer and that only a limited number of epidemiological studies were available. In 2016, a meta-analysis including several cohort studies (among them the Harvard Six Cities Study, California Teachers Study, American Cancer Society Cancer Prevention Study II, the UK Clinical Practice Research Datalink) showed no increased risk of lung cancer associated with ozone exposure (Atkinson et al., 2016). Among the recently published informative studies not included

in the meta-analysis, a project pooling seven large air pollution cohorts across Europe did not observe an association between ozone and lung cancer (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2021a). Sparse data exist for other cancer types.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In a 2-year bioassay conducted using Good Laboratory Practice (GLP), inhalation of ozone caused a marginal increase in the incidence of bronchioloalveolar adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in male and female mice and of bronchioloalveolar carcinoma in female mice. In a GLP lifetime study in the same laboratory, ozone caused an increase in the incidence of bronchioloalveolar carcinoma in male mice and of bronchioloalveolar adenoma in female mice (NTP, 1994b).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

A substantial number of studies relevant to ozone associated with air pollution and KCs are available. The ISA for ozone (US EPA, 2013a) suggested that ozone may contribute to DNA damage. Ozone has been observed to cause degradation of DNA in several different models and bacterial strains. Other experimental studies found increased DNA strand breaks in respiratory cells from guinea-pigs (Feng et al., 1997) and mice (Bornholdt et al., 2002). Cestonaro et al. (2017) exposed rats to ozone from an air purifier, for 3 hours/day or 24 hours/day for 14 or 28 days, and found a statistically significant increase in DNA damage in the 24-hours exposure group, relative to the other groups. In lung tissue from rats, Zhang et al. (2017) reported a significant increase in 8-oxoguanine after ozone exposure. In addition, several mechanistic studies in human primary cells and exposed humans considered the association between ozone and genotoxicity (Chen et al., 2006a; Giovannelli et al., 2006; Huen et al., 2006; Tovalin et al., 2006; Palli et al., 2009; Holland et al., 2015).

Ozone has been linked to decreased activity of DNA methyltransferases and hypermethylation on the apelin promoter in experimental rats (Miller et al., 2018). Prenatal exposure to ground-level ozone has also been linked to sex-specific differential methylated regions in cord blood samples in the Early Autism Risk Longitudinal Investigation (EARLI) prospective study (Ladd-Acosta et al., 2019). Surface-level ozone induces locus-specific hypomethylation of the genes encoding angiotensin converting enzyme (ACE), endothelin-1 (ET-1), and arginase (ARG) in healthy residents in Shanghai, China (Niu et al., 2018; Xia et al., 2018). A decrease in methylation of Alu, the most abundant repetitive element in the human genome, and an increase in DNA damage associated with ozone were observed in samples of peripheral blood collected from traffic police officers (Munnia et al., 2023). In addition, several studies in experimental animals and in exposed humans are available, associating ozone with induction of chronic inflammation (US EPA, 2013a; Hung et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2022c) and oxidative stress (US EPA, 2013a; Zhang et al., 2019a).

It is important to note that medical ozone, used in ozone therapy, has been shown to improve chronic inflammation (Zeng et al., 2020; Viebahn-Haensler and León Fernández, 2021). Ozone therapy can induce an adaptive antioxidant activity (Clavo et al., 2021), decreasing endogenous oxidative stress. Ozone restrains the proliferation and migration potential and epithelial–mesenchymal transition (EMT) process of liver cancer cells via ROS accumulation and PI3K/AKT/NF- $\kappa$ B suppression (Li et al., 2021d) and acts in several other mechanisms that are considered protective from carcinogenesis (DiMauro et al., 2019).

### **Summary**

Regarding evidence of cancer in humans, the available epidemiological studies do not show a positive association between ozone and lung cancer, and there is a lack of data for other cancer types. There is evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of ozone. Mechanistic studies in experimental systems and exposed humans show that ozone exhibits KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ozone to be warranted.



**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 051 Silica dust (CAS No. 14808-60-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Silica dust (crystalline, in the form of quartz or cristobalite) was previously classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C in 2009 (IARC, 2012c). There is *sufficient* evidence that crystalline silica dust exposure causes lung cancer. WHO and ILO have published joint estimates of the burden of disease for dusts (WHO, 2024b).

### Exposure characterization

Silica dust is listed by the OECD (2007) and the US EPA (2024a) as a high production volume chemical. However, the main exposure hazard in crystalline silica dust is through process-generated exposure in a variety of settings (e.g. mining, stonecutting, concrete and cement drilling and cutting, and fabrication of engineered stone – see agent 052 in the present report). Despite the recognition more than 15 years ago of silica dust as an important cause of lung cancer, there is widespread occupational exposure globally.

### Cancer in humans

The literature on crystalline silica in relation to cancer sites other than the lung has been relatively sparse since the previous evaluation in 2009 (IARC, 2012c). A meta-analysis of the association between occupational exposure to crystalline silica and gastric cancer, including studies up to 2014, found a meta-RR of 1.25 (95% CI, 1.18–1.34). Study heterogeneity was partially explained by industry differences, with larger effect sizes observed in the mining and foundry industries (Lee et al., 2016a).

For laryngeal cancer, a meta-analysis of cohort and case–control studies of workers exposed to silica dust found a meta-SMR of 1.13 (95% CI, 0.82–1.45) overall, and a meta-SMR of 1.38 (95% CI, 0.79–1.96) for workers with silicosis (Chen and Tse, 2012). In case–control studies, a meta-OR of 1.39 (95% CI, 1.17–1.67) was seen. More recently, the SYNERGY–International Head and Neck Cancer Epidemiology (INHANCE) study applied a quantitative job-exposure matrix for four established occupational lung carcinogens to five case–control studies within the consortium. Quantitative exposure levels for respirable crystalline silica were assigned to occupational histories of 2256 laryngeal cancer cases and 7857 controls, recruited from 1989 to 2007 (Hall et al., 2020). The risk of laryngeal cancer from occupational silica exposure was estimated by sex, adjusted for many potential confounders (e.g. smoking and co-exposure to occupational carcinogens). Among men, values for linear trend were  $P < 0.05$  for cumulative exposure and  $P < 0.05$  for exposure duration to respirable crystalline silica; the strongest associations were observed for respirable crystalline silica at  $\geq 30$  years duration (OR, 1.4; 95% CI, 1.2–1.7).

### Summary

New studies of cancer in humans are available to support a potential evaluation of *sufficient* or *limited* evidence for additional cancer sites related to crystalline silica exposure. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of silica dust to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 052 Engineered stone fabrication

### Current IARC/WHO classification

The fabrication of engineered stone has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. However, silica dust (crystalline, in the form of quartz or cristobalite), which is the main constituent of engineered stone, was classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C in 2009 (IARC, 2012c). The Working Group concluded that silica dust causes lung cancer (see agent 051 in the present report). WHO and ILO have published joint estimates of the burden of disease for dusts (WHO, 2024b).

### Exposure characterization

Engineered stone is a composite material made up of silica powder mixed with adhesives to create a solid surface that mimics natural stone. It is also known as artificial stone, agglomerated stone, or manufactured stone, and by various trade names. The main use of engineered stone is in kitchen and bathroom benchtops.

Different engineered stone products vary widely in composition (Kumarasamy et al., 2022). Most contain between 87.9% and 99.6% SiO<sub>2</sub>, but this is made up of varying percentages of quartz and cristobalite (León-Jiménez et al., 2020; Kumarasamy et al., 2022). Other materials found in engineered stone products include metals (e.g. Al, Na, Fe, Ca, Ti), volatile organic compounds (e.g. styrene, toluene, *m*-xylene), and other hydrocarbons (e.g. phenanthrene, naphthalene) (León-Jiménez et al., 2020).

Engineered stone was first developed in the 1960s and became increasingly popular in North America, Europe, and Australasia in the 2000s. Most engineered stone is now manufactured in China and India, but no studies of exposure during manufacture of the original product were available to the Advisory Group.

Exposure to process-generated agents occurs when the manufactured product is cut, ground, shaped, and polished to fit the requirements for a kitchen or bathroom. Initially, fabrication is performed in workshops, but often some final shaping and cutting is needed during in-home installation. The dust produced when dry cutting engineered stone is very fine (< 1 µm) and consists of > 80% respirable crystalline silica (Ramkissoon et al., 2023). Engineered stone dust particles seem to be more irregular than natural stone dust particles, with more sharp edges and fractures along the surface (Ramkissoon et al., 2023).

Several studies have investigated levels of worker exposure to respirable quartz during cutting, grinding, and shaping of engineered stone. The American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists (ACGIH) recommends a health-based threshold limit value (TLV) air concentration of 0.025 mg/m<sup>3</sup> but most countries have a TLV between 0.05 and 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> (IFA, 2024). Levels of exposure above 0.1 mg/m<sup>3</sup> are common when workers use dry cutting, even for relatively short periods (Phillips et al., 2013). Wet cutting reduces exposure levels considerably, but exposures above 0.05 mg/m<sup>3</sup> are commonly seen, even with wet cutting. For example, in an Australian study of 123 workers who all used wet cutting, the geometric mean (GM) respirable crystalline silica (RCS) was 0.034 mg/m<sup>3</sup> as an 8-hour time weighted average (TWA) (90% credibility interval, 0.030–0.040 mg/m<sup>3r</sup>), with a 95th percentile of 0.174 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, and the highest exposure measured was 0.33 mg/m<sup>3</sup> (Weller et al., 2024). Similarly, a US study of 47 workplaces found an 8-hour TWA of over 0.05 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in 25% of workshops, and observed that in half the workplaces at least one worker had an 8-hour TWA exposure above 0.05 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, despite all facilities using wet cutting (Surasi et al., 2022). The lowest exposures occur when the cutting is remote-controlled or automated (Phillips et al., 2013).

In December 2023, the Australian governments decided that manufacturing, supplying, processing, and installing engineered stone would be banned as of 1 July 2024 because of the risk of silicosis (Safe Work Australia, 2023). No other country has yet banned engineered stone.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies directly relatable to exposure to engineered stone and cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies specifically on engineered stone and cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There is increasing evidence associating occupational exposure to engineered stone with inflammatory markers in human cell lines in vitro (Ramkissoon et al., 2023) and with the development of pulmonary silicosis (García-Núñez et al., 2022; Hoy et al., 2023) and fibrosis (León-Jiménez et al., 2020) in exposed humans. These could be considered end-points relevant for chronic inflammation. Ramkissoon et al. (2023) found that, in addition to silica, aluminium, and cobalt were also associated with the inflammatory response, highlighting the importance of non-silica elements. Patients with silicosis caused by occupational exposure to engineered stone present a rapid progression from simple silicosis to progressive massive fibrosis (García-Núñez et al., 2022). In addition, molecular end-points associated with chronic inflammation and oxidative stress have been identified in experimental systems (Scalia Carneiro et al., 2020; Ramkissoon et al., 2023) and in exposed humans (Blanco-Pérez et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

Fabrication of engineered stone releases high levels of dust, which consists primarily of fine silica particles. There are other components as well, including metals and resins, in lower concentrations. It is well established that silica dust causes cancer in humans and it is currently classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) (see agent 051). There are no studies available regarding cancer in humans from engineered stone fabrication. There is sparse mechanistic evidence that engineered stone induces chronic inflammation in experimental systems and in exposed humans. The Advisory Group considered that this evaluation would be a specific exposure scenario for crystalline silica, which is already classified in Group 1 and therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of engineered stone fabrication is unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **053 Carbon black, bulk and nanoscale (CAS No. 1333-86-4)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Carbon black (bulk-scale) was previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 93 in 2006 (IARC, 2010f), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals for both carbon black and its extracts.

Carbon black was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### **Exposure characterization**

Carbon black, a particulate form of elemental carbon, serves as a key reinforcing filler and is widely used in the rubber industry (e.g. in tyre manufacturing). Distinguished from soot (i.e. black carbon) – an undesired by-product of incomplete combustion in materials containing carbon – exposure scenarios encompass various occupational environments, such as in the production of rubber, paint, ink, plastics, paper,

and ceramics, as well as in printing and coating applications (IARC, 2010f). Inhalation is the primary exposure route for humans.

Carbon black is listed by the OECD (2007) and the US EPA (2024a) as a high production volume chemical.

### **Cancer in humans**

Since the meeting in 2006 for *IARC Monographs* Volume 93 (IARC, 2010f), additional analyses of the three main cohort studies on the carcinogenicity of carbon black in humans were conducted. Following IARC's recommendations on controlling potential biases and confounding, as well as considering dose–response assessment (Ward et al., 2010a; Turner et al., 2023), these reports introduced new metrics and statistical analysis approaches compared with previous studies. These industry-supported reanalyses generally found that carbon black exposure was not associated with lung cancer mortality (Yong et al., 2019). In a UK cohort update, carbon black (or chemicals associated with its production) was associated with lung cancer mortality at two plants, but no such association was found at three other plants studied (Sorahan and Harrington, 2007). A similar method of evaluation in a German cohort, focusing on the first 15 years after employment, did not find a similar decline in the risk of lung cancer after cessation of employment (Morfeld and McCunney, 2007). Other reports for the German cohort, using a multimodel Cox regression approach and Bayesian procedure, also found no association (Morfeld and McCunney 2009, 2010). In the last follow-up study of a US cohort, following IARC recommendations for dose–response assessment, higher cumulative exposure cut points showed an elevated risk of lung cancer mortality without a statistically significant dose–response relation (Dell et al., 2015). Furthermore, in a recent meta-analysis, which combined SMR and Cox proportional hazards results from the US, UK, and German cohort studies, a small and statistically non-significant positive slope estimate was indicated when exposure was measured with no lag. In this study, introducing a 20-year lagging time for exposure showed a slope close to null (Yong et al., 2019).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 2010f), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals of the carcinogenicity of carbon black. Ultrafine carbon black, when administered by intratracheal instillation, caused benign and malignant lung tumours in rats (Kolling et al., 2011). Spleen haemangioma and lung adenoma have been observed in rasH2 mice after subcutaneous administration of ultrafine carbon black (Takanashi et al., 2012).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Carbon black nanoparticles caused DNA damage in a human A549 alveolar epithelial cell line and in a human THP-1 monocytic cell line (Don Porto Carero et al., 2001). They increased mRNA expression and protein levels of IL-6 and IL-8 in human bronchial epithelial cells in vitro (Boland et al., 1999; Zhang et al., 2023d), and of NOD-like receptor protein 3 (NLRP3) inflammasome in human corneal cells (Long et al., 2020; Xiao et al., 2022). Ultrafine carbon black by inhalation in pregnant mice induced persistent lung inflammation in mothers and DNA strand breaks in the livers of mothers and their offspring (Jackson et al., 2012a). Exposure of pregnant mice to carbon black by intratracheal instillation affected several biological pathways (cellular signalling, inflammation, cell cycle, and lipid metabolism) in female offspring (Bourdon et al., 2012; Jackson et al., 2012b). Induced DNA strand breaks in BAL cells and lung tissue (Kyjovska et al., 2015), as well as perturbations of inflammatory cytokine and chemokine transcripts, supported by concomitant changes in BAL cell counts (Bourdon et al., 2012), were also observed in female mice after intratracheal instillation of Printex 90 carbon black nanoparticles. The expression levels of mRNAs associated with angiogenesis, cell migration, proliferation, chemotaxis, and growth factor production were

altered in the cerebral cortex of offspring after maternal exposure to carbon black nanoparticles (Win-Shwe and Fujimaki, 2011; Onoda et al., 2017).

### Summary

Carbon black differs from soot (or black carbon). The evidence from epidemiological studies of cancer in humans is not robust. No evidence that carbon black exhibits KCs in exposed humans or human primary cells has been identified; therefore, a re-evaluation of the agent would be unlikely to lead to a change in the classification from Group 2B. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of carbon black (bulk and nanoscale) is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 054 Coal dust

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Coal dust was previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 68 in 1996 (IARC, 1997). WHO and ILO have published joint estimates of the burden of disease for dusts (WHO, 2024b). Coal dust was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new findings of lung cancer in cohort and case–control studies of coal miners, as well as mechanistic evidence of KCs (e.g. genotoxic and epigenetic effects) in exposed miners.

### Exposure characterization

Coal dust is a heterogeneous by-product of coal mining, comprising a mixture of carbon-based main compounds and more than 50 different other elements and their oxides. Across the globe, coal is primarily used as a fuel to generate electric power. Coal is the second largest energy source worldwide, and global consumption appears to be increasing. Coal is listed as a high production volume substance by the US EPA (2024a).

Occupational exposure to coal dust occurs predominantly in coal mining and to a lesser degree via other industrial processes. The general population might be exposed through environmental air pollution (IARC, 2019a). Household coal use for heating and cooking occurs particularly in LMICs and is expected to lead to some coal dust exposure.

### Cancer in humans

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), an exposure–response association between exposure to coal dust and lung cancer mortality was reported in a cohort of coal miners in the USA (Graber et al., 2014). A case–control study, pooling data from 20 centres in Europe, Canada, and New Zealand, reported excess lung cancer risk in miners, after adjustment for smoking history and work in other at-risk occupations (Taeger et al., 2015). Similar findings were reported in a cohort of miners with coal workers' pneumoconiosis in Czechia (Tomášková et al., 2017). A meta-analysis on the association between coal mine dust and lung cancer mortality reported a meta-SMR of 1.16 (95% CI, 1.03–1.30), although with considerable heterogeneity ( $I^2 = 94.8\%$ ) (Li et al., 2021e). Another meta-analysis on coal mine workers, however, reported no increased risk for lung cancer, whereas a suggestive positive association was observed for stomach cancer (Alif et al., 2022). A higher SIR was also observed for stomach cancer among male coal workers, compared with non-coal workers (SIR: 1.318 versus 1.267) in a study conducted in the Republic of Korea and published after the meta-analyses mentioned (Kang et al., 2021a). A recent publication on US

coal miners showed increased mortality for lung cancer, compared with the non-mining US population (Almberg et al., 2023).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

*IARC Monographs* Volume 68 (IARC, 1997) reports that there is *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of coal dust. Coal dust was not found to induce lung tumours in inhalation carcinogenicity studies (Martin et al., 1975; Busch et al., 1981; Nikula et al., 1997). Increased lung tumours were reported after repeated intratracheal instillation of coal dust in a lifetime rat carcinogenicity study (Pott and Roller, 2005), although no detailed carcinogenicity data are available from this paper.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Exposure-related genotoxicity in oral mucosa cells of coal miners was observed (da Silva Júnior et al., 2018). Additional studies on exposed workers revealed exposure-related genotoxic, epigenetic, and cytostatic effects, including an increased frequency of binucleated lymphocytes with micronuclei, nucleoplasmic bridges, and nuclear buds, as well as decreased telomere length and DNA hypermethylation (Rohr et al., 2013; Sinitsky et al., 2016; Miranda-Guevara et al., 2023). Furthermore, oxidative stress and alterations in gene expression associated with DNA damage were detected in lung cells (Calu-1 cells) exposed to coal dust (Li et al., 2022b; Tirado-Ballesteros et al., 2022). Inflammation and fibrosis were reported in a mouse model of coal workers' pneumoconiosis after exposure for 1 and 3 months (Wang et al., 2022c). Pinho et al. (2004) reported oxidative stress and inflammation in lung epithelium of male Wistar rats after acute exposure to coal dust (Pinho et al., 2004). Inhalation of coal dust was reported to cause bronchioloalveolar hyperplasia in 7 days or 14 weeks, in rat studies (Kolling et al., 2011; Kania et al., 2014).

### **Summary**

There is human evidence of carcinogenicity of coal dust, particularly for lung cancer and stomach cancer. Evidence of the carcinogenicity of coal dust in experimental animals is sparse. There is ample mechanistic evidence related to the KCs in exposed humans and in experimental systems; this supports the re-evaluation of coal dust. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of coal dust to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **055 Acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene particles emitted by 3D printers**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene (ABS) copolymers were evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 19 in 1978 (IARC, 1979c) and *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### **Exposure characterization**

The use of 3D printing technology has expanded from workplace use in industries and small businesses to schools and homes; this is expected to increase the number of workers and consumers who use these devices. However, the number of exposed individuals is not documented. The most commonly used filament materials in fused deposition modelling 3D printers are polylactic acid (PLA) and ABS. ABS is a petrochemical-derived copolymer created by the copolymerization of the monomers acrylonitrile, 1,3-butadiene, and styrene. (Jyoti et al., 2015).

The 3D printing process releases particles, which are mostly ultrafine (diameter, < 100 nm), and volatile organic chemicals from melting thermoplastic filaments (Byrley et al., 2019). Ultrafine particles are released at rates of billions of particles per minute during operation (Stephens et al., 2013; Stefaniak et al., 2017;

Byrley et al., 2021). Across the literature, it is generally concluded that ABS filaments produce higher particle number emission rates than PLA (Azimi et al., 2016; Stefaniak et al., 2017). In addition to particles, 3D printers also emit numerous volatile, semi-volatile, and non-volatile organic compounds during thermal processing, such as aldehydes, ketones, alcohols, aromatics (benzene, toluene, ethylbenzene, xylenes, styrene), and phthalates (Stefaniak et al., 2017; Kim et al., 2022c; Wojnowski et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in humans**

No relevant studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Acrylonitrile, butadiene, and styrene monomers have each been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme; it was established that there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals. However, no carcinogenic data for experimental systems for ABS polymer particles emitted by 3D printers were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

ABS particle emissions induce significant dose-dependent increases in cytotoxicity, oxidative stress, apoptosis, and the production of proinflammatory cytokines and chemokines in human small airway epithelial cells (Farcas et al., 2019; He et al., 2024). The evidence for carcinogen mechanisms is sparse in laboratory animals (Farcas et al., 2019). A significant increase in proinflammatory markers (IL-12p70, IL-13, IL-15, IFN $\gamma$ , TNF $\alpha$ , IL-17A, VEGF, MCP-1, and MIP-1 $\alpha$ ) was observed in an in vitro model in primary normal human bronchial epithelial (NHBE) cells, isolated from the epithelium of human bronchi, first passaged in differentiation medium and then exposed to ABS filaments in an air–liquid interface (Farcas et al., 2022). There was no evidence of genotoxicity or of any effect on cell viability.

### **Summary**

No studies were available on human cancer or cancer in experimental animals after exposure to ABS particles emitted by 3D printers. There is minimal available mechanistic evidence of ABS related to the KCs and in regard to ABS polymer behaviour, in comparison with the behaviour of the monomers. Interpretation of some of the mechanistic evidence is complicated; for example, apoptosis could reduce the numbers of problematic cells, such as those exhibiting oxidative stress. The Advisory Group considered that additional mechanistic information would be required for an evaluation of ABS particles emitted by 3D printers to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **056 Microplastics and nanoplastics**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Micro- and nanoplastics have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. A WHO report, identifying research needs and defining the scope of future work needed on microplastics particles, was published to address current uncertainties (WHO, 2022c).

### **Exposure characterization**

Plastics are widely used in daily life; thus, large amounts of plastics waste are released into the environment, either directly or through improper reuse or recycling (Stapleton, 2021). According to the UN Environment Programme, 400 million tonnes of plastics waste are produced every year (UNEP, 2023).

In the environment, primary and secondary micro- and nanoplastics can be found. Primary micro- and nanoplastics are processed plastics particles that are commonly added to personal care products (e.g. cosmetics, detergents, toothpastes, scrub facial cleansers, drug carriers). Secondary micro- and nanoplastics are plastics debris that degrade from large pieces of plastics waste, through UV radiation, physical wear, and biodegradation in the environment (Jiang et al., 2020b).

Micro- and nanoplastics are widely distributed in the environment (food, water, air) and have been found in human faeces, suggesting exposure through the digestive tract (Schwabl et al., 2019; Jiang et al., 2020b). The main routes of exposure are inhalation and ingestion. Indoor air measurements have reported 1600–11 000 microplastics fibres/m<sup>2</sup> per day, depending on indoor environment and lifestyle (Stapleton, 2021; Sangkham et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Micro- and nanoplastics alter molecular and functional traits associated with the carcinogenic process, such as, in mouse embryonic cells, the ability to grow independently of anchorage, migration, and invasion (Barguilla et al., 2022). Exposure to microplastics and nanoplastics may also induce genotoxicity or mutagenicity in human cells (Domenech et al., 2023). Micro- and nanoplastics seem to induce cellular toxicity through genotoxicity, oxidative stress, membrane damage, and regulation of the immune response in human cells (epithelial, cerebral, or haematopoietic cells) (Schirinzi et al., 2017; Rubio et al., 2020; Banerjee and Shelper, 2021; Llorca and Farré, 2021; Baj et al., 2022). Microplastics regulate immune responses in human cell lines by regulating genes and proteins involved in innate immunity (Chiu et al., 2015; Forte et al., 2016; Choi et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

No evidence is available regarding cancer in humans or in experimental animals from exposure to micro- and nanoplastics. There is some mechanistic evidence that micro- and nanoplastics exhibit KCs in experimental systems, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, inflammation, and immunosuppression. Despite emerging evidence regarding KCs in experimental systems (including human cells), this field is rapidly evolving; this suggests that an evaluation within the next 5 years may be premature. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of microplastics and nanoplastics is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **057 Asbestos (CAS No. 132207-32-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Asbestos was classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C in 2009 (IARC, 2012c). There is *sufficient* evidence that exposure to all forms of asbestos causes mesothelioma and cancers of the lung, larynx, and ovary. Evidence for cancers of the pharynx, stomach, and colorectum was found to be *limited*. A WHO report was published to assist WHO Member States in managing health risks of exposure to chrysotile asbestos (WHO, 2014).



## Exposure characterization

Asbestos is the generic commercial designation for a group of naturally occurring mineral silicate fibres of the serpentine and amphibole series (IARC, 2012c). Past exposure conditions for asbestos have been characterized in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C and previous volumes (IARC, 1973, 1977, 1987a, 2012c). Despite bans on most uses of asbestos in many countries, exposure continues to occur globally, through its continued widespread use in countries that have not implemented a ban (Lin et al., 2019), and because of legacy materials used in building and vehicle construction. Thus, WHO estimates that 125 million people are exposed occupationally to asbestos (WHO, 2018), and residential exposure is expected to continue to occur.

## Cancer in humans

Dozens of studies have been published since the 2009 meeting for *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C (IARC, 2012c) on the association of asbestos with cancer types other than mesothelioma, or cancers of the larynx, lung, and ovary, particularly across the digestive tract, and such results are the focus here. A meta-analysis of the association between occupational exposure to asbestos and oesophageal cancer found a meta-SMR of 1.24 (95% CI, 1.13–1.38) among 20 cohort studies (Li et al., 2016b). A meta-analysis of CRC after occupational exposure to asbestos found a meta-SMR of 1.16 (95% CI, 1.05–1.29), which was higher for studies that also showed an elevation in lung cancer risk (meta-SMR, 1.43; 95% CI, 1.30–1.56) (Kwak et al., 2019). Since then, a study of a large cohort of chrysotile asbestos workers in Asbest, Russian Federation, observed inconsistent increases in cancers of the stomach and colorectum across dust and fibre exposure categories for men, with null findings for women (Schüz et al., 2024). A study pooling 51 asbestos-exposed cohorts in Italy found elevated rates of bladder cancer, but not of cancers of the oral cavity or pharynx, or digestive cancers (Ferrante et al., 2024).

There is also emerging evidence for an association between asbestos exposure and intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma (ICC), sometimes called intrahepatic bile duct cancer. In a population-based case–control study in Italy, an elevated risk of ICC was observed among those who had been exposed occupationally, compared with those who had never been exposed (adjusted OR, 4.8; 95% CI, 1.7–13.3) (Brandi et al., 2013). A nested case–control study in the Nordic Occupational Cancer (NOCCA) cohort reported an increased risk of ICC with cumulative exposure to asbestos ( $\geq 15.0$  fibres/mL per year, compared with those never exposed; OR, 1.7; 95% CI, 1.1–2.6) (Farioli et al., 2018). Among shipbreaking workers in Taiwan, China, an increased risk of intrahepatic bile duct cancer was seen among those with high asbestos exposure (HR, 1.60; 95% CI, 1.08–2.36) (Wu et al., 2015a). A recent case-series study examining patients with ICC, which stratified into small duct (sd-ICC) and large duct (ld-ICC) morphological subtypes, suggested that sd-ICC might be more frequently associated with asbestos exposure than ld-ICC (Vasuri et al., 2023).

## Mechanistic evidence

There is evidence that asbestos can reach tissues outside the respiratory tract, as discussed in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C (IARC, 2012c) and in other works (e.g. Kobayashi et al., 1987; Ehrlich et al., 1991; Brandi and Tavorlari, 2020). A recent review of 12 studies that examined asbestos fibres in extrapulmonary tissues confirmed that asbestos fibres have been detected in 10 abdominal organs and tissues: stomach, small intestine, pancreas, spleen, colon, liver, gall bladder, kidney, urinary bladder, and abdominal lymph nodes, although with wide variability in sample sizes and fibre concentrations and counting methods (Caraballo-Arias et al., 2023).

## Summary

The evidence for a causal association between asbestos and extrapulmonary organs and tissues, particularly in the digestive tract, appears to have strengthened since the last evaluation. The plausibility of exposure within the digestive tract has concomitantly increased. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of asbestos to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 058 Taconite (CAS No. 12249-26-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Taconite has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Taconite is a low-grade iron ore, with a natural iron concentration of approximately 30%. Taconite deposits can contain high concentrations of non-asbestiform amphibole elongate mineral particles (EMPs). Taconite iron ore has been extensively mined in the Mesabi Iron Range in Minnesota and the Marquette Iron Range in Michigan, USA, since the mid-1950s, and is used in steel production and road patching. Taconite mining is an open pit process that involves blasting rock with explosives, crushing the rock into powder, magnetically extracting the iron, and reforming a more concentrated product into high-grade iron ore pellets (Allen et al., 2015). Mining and processing of taconite may result in exposure to non-asbestiform amphibole and non-amphibole EMPs, respirable silica, and cleavage fragments (Hwang et al., 2013; Allen et al., 2015).

Taconite ore-containing wastes have been deposited throughout the environment, including in the Great Lakes (Wilson et al., 2008). There has been associated concern over airborne and drinking-water environmental exposure among the general public, although the primary exposure is inhalation exposure among taconite miners and ore-processing workers.

### Cancer in humans

A cohort study of 40 720 Minnesota taconite miners, employed between 1937 and 1983, found 51 incident cases of mesothelioma and 973 cases of lung cancer. SIRs of 2.4 (95% CI, 1.8–3.2) for mesothelioma and 1.1 (95% CI, 1.0–1.3) for lung cancer, compared with state rates, were reported (Allen et al., 2015). A subsequent nested case–control study found positive exposure–response associations for mesothelioma with number of years employed in the taconite industry (RR, 1.03; 95% CI, 1.00–1.06) and cumulative EMP exposure (RR, 1.10; 95% CI, 0.97–1.24) (Lambert et al., 2016).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In a lifetime carcinogenicity study of unfiltered city tap water in Duluth, Minnesota, USA, municipal water reservoir sediment suspension, taconite plant tailings, amosite asbestos, and diatomaceous earth in Sprague-Dawley rats, the incidence of malignant tumours was not significantly different from that in control rats (Hilding et al., 1981). No carcinogenicity studies in experimental animals in compliance with GLP or OECD guidelines were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Dimethyl taconite, a taconite derivative, was shown to inhibit angiogenesis in cultured human endothelial cells and also to modulate the immune response in cultured human endothelial cells (Vidal et al., 2022). There is a lack of evidence regarding the genotoxicity of taconite or of non-asbestiform EMPs found in taconite iron ore in exposed humans or experimental systems. However, there are reports of inflammation and immune responses in taconite mine workers who were co-exposed to silica and quartz, which are

ingredients of respirable dust in taconite mining (Balmes and Speizer, 2012). In a cross-sectional study of 1188 taconite-exposed miners in north-eastern Minnesota, pleural abnormalities were found in 18% of the miners, with evidence of an exposure–response relation using EMP exposure measures (Perlman et al., 2018). Notable gaps are apparent in the understanding of the specific dimensions, such as length and width, as well as the biopersistence characteristics, of EMPs. These have not yet been thoroughly characterized in terms of their structure–activity relations; they could lead to lung injury (Goodman et al., 2023).

### Summary

There is evidence from a single, but large, exposed population of miners of an association of exposure to non-asbestiform amphibole EMPs derived from taconite with risk of mesothelioma and lung cancer. There are sparse data for experimental animals regarding taconite-induced carcinogenesis. Evidence on whether taconite exhibits the KCs in exposed humans or experimental systems is also sparse. However, studies in taconite miners with co-exposures to respirable silica and quartz have found evidence of increased pleural plaques, inflammation, and immune response associated with occupational exposures. Given that mesothelioma and pleural plaques have been found almost exclusively to be associated with exposure to asbestiform fibres, the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of taconite to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 059 Multiwalled carbon nanotubes (CAS No. 308068-56-6) and other carbon nanotubes

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Multiwalled carbon nanotubes (MWCNTs) were previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme in *IARC Monographs* Volume 111 in 2014 (IARC, 2017c). In that evaluation, one specific type of MWCNT (MWCNT-7) was classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), and every other type, as well as single-walled carbon nanotubes (SWCNTs), was evaluated as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3). The classification arrived at for MWCNT-7 was based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

MWCNTs other than MWCNT-7 were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), pending the publication of a bioassay underway at the US NTP (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Carbon nanotubes are tubes made of carbon with diameters in the nanometre range. They are manufactured in several important forms, including SWCNTs, double-walled carbon nanotubes (DWCNTs), and MWCNTs and are used in several types of product (e.g. electronics, lithium-ion batteries, polymer composites, pharmaceutical or biomedical devices) (NIOSH, 2013). Occupational exposure studies have been conducted in Asia, Europe, and the USA, with the main exposure concerns being inhalation and dermal exposure among workers manufacturing or using carbon nanotubes (CNTs) (Fatkhutdinova et al., 2016b; Kuijpers et al., 2016; Dahm et al., 2018; Guseva Canu et al., 2020a). In a USA-wide study of 12 facilities manufacturing or using MWCNTs, SWCNTs, or carbon nanofibres (CNFs), nearly all workers had inhalation exposure, 70% of workers showed evidence of dermal exposure, and 18% had detectable CNTs or CNFs in induced sputum (Dahm et al., 2018). The extent to which CNTs occur in non-occupational settings is unclear. A case report found evidence of CNTs of various sizes and types in lung biopsy specimens

of several patients who had been exposed to high concentrations of dust at the World Trade Center collapse and also found CNTs in samples of the dust (Wu et al., 2010).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Since the previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 2017c), new studies have emerged. A 2-year study of intratracheal instillation exposure to MWCNT-7 in F344 rats showed significant increases in lung adenomas, lung carcinomas, and pleural mesotheliomas (Hojo et al., 2022). In a study by Fukushima et al. (2018), MWCNT-7 were administered by different routes (intraperitoneal, intrascrotal, subcutaneous, inhalation, intratracheal instillation) in rats and mice. Inhalation exposure increased lung tumour incidence in rats, whereas intraperitoneal injection in mice and rats induced peritoneal mesothelioma. Intratracheal instillation of MWCNTs induced lung carcinomas and mesothelioma in rats.

In a 2-year whole-body inhalation study in F344 rats, bronchioloalveolar carcinoma, and combined carcinoma and adenoma, were significantly increased in the highest dose group (2 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) in male and female rats exposed to MWCNT-7 (Kasai et al., 2016).

Takagi et al. (2012) reported that a single intraperitoneal injection of 300 µg/mouse of µm-MWCNT-7 in p53-heterozygous mice induced granuloma and hyperplasia, even in a low-dose group. In male Wistar rats injected intraperitoneally with a single dose of MWCNT, an increased incidence of mesothelioma was observed (Muller et al., 2009).

Another straight type, MWCNT-N, was administered to male rats by transtracheal intrapulmonary spraying (TIPS) during the initial 2 weeks of an experiment and the rats were observed for up to 109 weeks. MWCNT-N induced malignant mesothelioma and lung carcinoma (Suzui et al., 2016). A tangled-type, MWCNT-B, was found to be carcinogenic to the rat lung when administered into the airway by TIPS (Saleh et al., 2020). DWCNTs administered to the rat lung through the airway by TIPS developed lung tumours (adenoma and adenocarcinoma) and mesothelioma (Saleh et al., 2022).

The Advisory Group is also aware of 2-year inhalation studies, being conducted under GLP, that are underway to determine the effect of another type of MWCNT (1020 long MWCNT), in male and female rats and mice (NTP, 2019a).

Overall, there is persuasive evidence of the induction of lung tumours in male and female rats by MWCNTs other than MWCNT-7, for which an evaluation of *sufficient* evidence from experimental animals has already been established.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Several studies relevant to KCs have been conducted in workers exposed to CNTs. As summarized in a review article (Kumah et al., 2023), five studies of workers exposed to CNTs examined biomarkers of chronic inflammation (including fibrosis markers) and oxidative stress. Associations of these markers with CNT exposures were observed in most of the studies (e.g. Liao et al., 2014; Fatkhutdinova et al., 2016a; Vlaanderen et al., 2017; Beard et al., 2018). A study involving workers handling CNTs found a decreased immunological response to several microbial immunostimulants administered ex vivo to whole blood, in relation to measured CNT exposure in the workplace (Schubauer-Berigan et al., 2020).

Kumah et al. (2023) summarized the available literature on human primary cells and human cell lines. Most studies identified oxidative stress biomarkers, and several identified evidence of genotoxicity, inflammation, and alteration of cell proliferation or cell death (KC10). DNA strand breaks were observed in studies of human bronchial epithelial cells and human lymphocytes (Ghosh et al., 2011; Lindberg et al., 2013). Studies in immortalized human BEAS-2B bronchial epithelial cells exposed to 30 µg/mL MWCNT-

7 for 24 hours demonstrated a significant increase in cytokines TNF $\alpha$ , IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, IL-8, IL-10, and IL-12 (Tsukahara and Haniu 2011). More recently, Fraser et al. (2020) showed induction of the formation of micronuclei, cytotoxicity, oxidative stress, and DNA double-strand breaks in human bronchioepithelial cells exposed to CNTs. Similar findings were observed by another group (Fatkhutdinova et al., 2024) using the comet assay in three human cell lines of respiratory origin (BEAS-2B bronchial epithelial cells, A549 alveolar epithelial cells, MRC5-SV40 fibroblasts).

While some studies in mice and rats exposed to MWCNT-7 showed DNA strand breaks (Jacobsen et al., 2009; Ghosh et al., 2011), others have shown oxidative DNA damage measured by 8-OHdG (Folkmann et al., 2009; Kato et al., 2013; Xu et al., 2014). Inhalation studies in rats showed an increased inflammatory response (Ma-Hock et al., 2009; Pauluhn 2010; Kim et al., 2015a; Kasai et al., 2016). Chronic inflammatory response was observed in male ICR mice with intratracheal installation of MWCNT-7 (Park et al., 2009b). Horibata et al. (2022) observed genotoxic effects in lung cells of mice exposed to whole-body inhalation of MWCNTs. In another in vivo study in mice exposed to MWCNT-7 orally, a genotoxic effect was observed using a single-cell alkaline gel electrophoresis assay (Snegin et al., 2020).

### Summary

The evidence for cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence for several KCs, including genotoxicity, inflammation, and immune response in exposed humans, human primary cells, and cell lines, and in experimental animals exposed to MWCNTs, provide support for an *IARC Monographs* evaluation. The Advisory Group is also aware of 2-year inhalation studies, conducted under GLP, of the effect of 1020 long MWCNTs in male and female rats and mice, which are underway (NTP, 2019a).

The Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of multiwalled carbon nanotubes and other carbon nanotubes to be warranted and recommends evaluating MWCNTs together with DWCNTs and SWCNTs, and to consider grouping together CNTs with similar structural properties.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 060 Anatase-type and other types of nano-titanium dioxide

### Current IARC/WHO classification

With a few exceptions, nanomaterials have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. MWCNTs, which were evaluated in *IARC Monographs* Volume 111 in 2014 (IARC, 2017c), have been nominated separately (see agent 059). Nanoscale cobalt compounds were evaluated in *IARC Monographs* Volume 131 in 2022 (IARC, 2023b). Bulk-scale titanium dioxide (TiO<sub>2</sub>) was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 93 in 2006 (IARC, 2010f), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals. This classification is presumed to include at least some nanoscale forms of some types of TiO<sub>2</sub>.

Nanoscale TiO<sub>2</sub> and other nanomaterials were given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of anticipated findings for studies in humans and experimental systems.

### Exposure characterization

Nanomaterials can be described as materials containing primary particles with at least one dimension as small as 1–100 nm, according to the definition of the International Organization for Standardization (ISO) (Gebel, 2012). The development of precision technology has led to an increase in the production of nanomaterials. Nanosized TiO<sub>2</sub> particles are some of the most widely manufactured nanoparticles on a global scale and are in the top five nanoparticle types used in consumer products (Rollerova et al., 2015).

Engineered nanomaterials are used in a variety of applications and consumer products, such as medical products, cosmetics, textiles, paints, food packaging, and other personal care products, and exposure of the human body is expected to increase (Mackevica et al., 2016). Ultrafine TiO<sub>2</sub> is widely used in several applications, including white pigment in paint, ceramics, as a food additive, in food packaging material, sunscreens, cosmetic creams, and as a component of surgical implants (Rollerova et al., 2015).

Human exposure to nanomaterials occurs through the respiratory tract and may occur through absorption in the skin, digestive tract, and eyes. However, a few studies have revealed that the TiO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles could penetrate the skin and translocate to other tissues, and intravenous injection is indicated as another probable route of exposure (Shakeel et al., 2016).

### **Cancer in humans**

In Canada, Europe, and the USA, epidemiological studies have been conducted on the association of exposure to TiO<sub>2</sub> with cancer of the lung, but not specifically on nano-TiO<sub>2</sub>. In a French cohort of 833 male workers, the fully adjusted model yielded a HR of 3.7 (95% CI, 0.79–17.95) for TiO<sub>2</sub>-exposed workers versus unexposed workers and a HR of 27.3 (95% CI, 4.35–172) for those exposed to > 2.4 mg/m<sup>3</sup> as an annual average concentration (Guseva Canu et al., 2020b). A pooled European cohort of 7341 male workers employed in TiO<sub>2</sub> production in Finland, France, Italy, and the UK showed evidence of healthy worker survivor bias (HWSB) that masked an increase in lung cancer risk: at the age of 70 years, the estimated number of lung cancer deaths expected in the cohort after 35-year exposure was 293 for an exposure of 2.4 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, 235 for an exposure of 0.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, and 211 for an exposure of 0 mg/m<sup>3</sup>, after controlling for the HWSB (Guseva Canu et al., 2022).

Importantly, these studies are not explicitly of nanoscale forms of TiO<sub>2</sub>. The possibility that nanoparticles of substances may cause cancer in humans has been postulated, but no studies are available (Becker et al., 2011).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In a 2-year inhalation carcinogenicity study of rats exposed to anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub>, bronchioloalveolar carcinoma incidence showed a significant increase, including a positive trend in male rats. In female rats, the incidence of bronchioloalveolar carcinoma exceeded the upper bound of the range for historical control data. Therefore, the substance showed evidence of lung carcinogenicity in male and female rats (JBRC, 2020a, b).

In a 26-week inhalation study in *rash2* mice, anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> did not exhibit carcinogenic effects (Yamano et al., 2022a). However, 26-week inhalation exposure to p53-knockout mice of anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> showed equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity in the lungs of male mice but no evidence of carcinogenic activity for female mice (JBRC, 2019).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The effects of fine particles scattered throughout the body or accumulated in the lungs are most apparent through the respiratory tract (Pietrojusti et al., 2018). TiO<sub>2</sub> is a genotoxic substance, and it is suggested that this genotoxicity is mediated by a secondary mechanism, rather than by direct DNA reactivity.

Numerous studies have shown that nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> can cause oxidative stress through the generation of ROS, and hence oxidative DNA damage and genotoxicity, suggesting that nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> is genotoxic in human cell lines and bacteria, and also induces cell proliferation (Bhattacharya et al., 2009; Jomini et al., 2012; Valdiglesias et al., 2013; Botelho et al., 2014; Kirkland et al., 2022; Shi et al., 2022).  $\gamma$ -H2AX, a marker of DNA damage, was increased in pulmonary proliferative lesions of rats exposed to anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> by inhalation (Yamano et al., 2022b).

In vivo studies have consistently shown that the inflammatory response to nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> is characterized by the infiltration of neutrophils in mice and rats (Ferin et al., 1992; Renwick et al., 2004; Chen et al., 2006b). This response is accompanied by an increase in particle-laden macrophages (Chen et al., 2006b; Johnston et al., 2009). Inflammation is likely to be mediated by increases in IL-8, and TNF $\alpha$  that have been observed in vivo and in vitro in rodents (Johnston et al., 2009). Moreover, nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> has been shown to induce reactive alveolar epithelial type 2 cell hyperplasia in rat lungs after subchronic inhalation exposure to anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> (Yamano et al., 2022a).

Anatase-type nano TiO<sub>2</sub> has been shown to have more toxicity than rutile TiO<sub>2</sub>, owing to its physical properties (Dunford et al., 1997).

### Summary

The available human cancer studies do not explicitly evaluate nanoscale forms of TiO<sub>2</sub>. Therefore, there is no human cancer evidence yet for anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> that could be evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The carcinogenicity study for anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> in experimental animals conducted at the Japan Bioassay Research Center (JBRC), performed in accordance with OECD guidelines and GLP, has shown positive evidence that might be considered *sufficient* by a Working Group. It is to be noted that the inhalation concentration for the anatase-type nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> carcinogenicity study in rats was extremely low (8 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) compared with that (250 mg/m<sup>3</sup>) for the rutile-type-TiO<sub>2</sub> carcinogenicity study in rats (IARC, 2010f).

There is mechanistic evidence that nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> particles exhibit KCs, including genotoxicity, chronic inflammation, and altered cell proliferation in experimental systems. Anatase-type nano TiO<sub>2</sub> has been shown to have greater toxicity than rutile TiO<sub>2</sub>, owing to its physical properties. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of nano-TiO<sub>2</sub> particles to be warranted. No other nanomaterials were considered in the prioritization for this nomination.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 061 Inorganic lead compounds (CAS No. 7439-92-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Inorganic lead compounds were previously classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 87 in 2004 (IARC, 2006b), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals and *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (specifically, for cancers of the stomach, lung, kidney, and brain). The JECFA last evaluated lead in 2011 and concluded that no PTWI in food could be determined, owing to the lack of a detectable threshold for neurodevelopmental and other effects (FAO/WHO, 2011a).

Inorganic lead compounds were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of emerging evidence regarding lung cancer, as well as convincing evidence of KCs (including genotoxicity) in exposed humans.

### Exposure characterization

Several inorganic lead compounds, including a variety of lead salts, lead oxides, and lead metal, are listed as high production volume chemicals by OECD (2007) and the US EPA (2024a). Ambient inorganic lead exposure in non-occupational environments primarily occurs through the ingestion of lead-containing paint chips and soils and through drinking-water in lead pipes (US EPA, 2024b). The typical blood lead level for adults in the USA is 0.855  $\mu$ g/dL of blood (CDC, 2019b). In the USA, occupational exposures to lead mainly occur in the mining, construction, manufacturing, and service industries (NIOSH, 2024). In 2021,

the number of US workers with blood lead concentrations  $\geq 10 \mu\text{g/dL}$  was 11.32 workers per 100 000 employed workers (NIOSH, 2024). However, the legacy of environmental lead contamination remains high, with the continued exposure of sensitive populations, including children, to household lead sources, such as lead-based paint and contaminated soils.

### **Cancer in humans**

In the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), several new studies were noted with positive findings for lung cancer, including a pooled mortality study in Finland, the UK, and the USA (Steenland et al., 2017) and a pooled incidence study in Finland and the UK (Steenland et al., 2019). A new analysis of the Finnish cohort (with slightly extended follow-up) confirmed the strong positive associations seen in the pooled incidence study, and incorporated adjustment for such confounders as smoking and co-exposures to lung carcinogens (Anttila et al., 2022). In an update for the US cohort, positive associations and an associated trend with exposure were strong for lung cancer (Barry and Steenland, 2019). A study of lead smelting workers in France, who were followed up for more than 45 years, found a positive trend in lung cancer mortality with cumulative lead exposure ( $P = 0.008$ ), but the association was reported to be non-significant after controlling for exposure to asbestos and other lung carcinogens (Leroyer et al., 2022). A few population-based studies found null associations; however, a positive trend with prediagnostic blood lead exposure and lung cancer mortality was seen among women in a follow-up study of the National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) II and III cohorts (Rhee et al., 2021).

For other cancer sites, notably the brain, kidney, bladder, and larynx, some positive associations, including exposure–response trends, have been reported with lead exposure (e.g. Rajaraman et al., 2006; van Wijngaarden and Dosemeci, 2006; Chowdhury et al., 2014; Steenland et al., 2017, 2019). A strong positive association was observed for cumulative lead exposure and liver cancer among lead smelter workers (Leroyer et al., 2022), which persisted after adjustment for co-exposures to carcinogens. Coffee intake was found to enhance the association between lead and renal cell carcinoma in a nested case–control study among smokers (Wu et al., 2022b). Recent findings for stomach cancer have been largely null (e.g. Steenland et al., 2019; Leroyer et al., 2022).

Recently, many studies have examined lead concentrations in case–control studies, using blood or urine measurements collected after case diagnosis and (in some instances) treatment (e.g. He et al., 2022b). Such studies are of limited utility in cancer hazard identification, owing to uncertainty in the temporal relation between lead exposure and cancer.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

The previous evaluation of inorganic lead compounds found *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals (IARC, 2006b). Key studies from the previous evaluation include positive findings after oral exposure in rats (e.g. Zawirska and Medraś, 1968, 1972; Azar et al., 1973; Waszynski, 1977; Zawirska, 1981; Koller et al., 1985; Nogueira, 1987; Fears et al., 1989) and mice (e.g. Van Esch and Kroes, 1969; Stoner et al., 1976; Poirier et al., 1984). Other studies showed tumour occurrence after subcutaneous injection of inorganic lead compounds in rats (e.g. Tönz, 1957; Baló et al., 1965; Roe et al., 1965; Furst et al., 1976).

The Advisory Group did not identify new findings from experimental animals on inorganic lead compounds and carcinogenesis.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Wang et al. (2023d) reported DNA methylation and genotoxicity in a cohort of 250 workers exposed to lead in northern China. In a study by Minozzo et al. (2004), increased frequency of micronuclei was observed in workers exposed to lead through recycling automotive batteries, as compared with controls. Increased frequencies of SCEs and micronuclei were reported in occupationally exposed cohorts in Thailand



(Wiwanitkit et al., 2008). In a Polish cohort of battery workers, DNA damage was reported (Palus et al., 2003). Steinmetz-Beck et al. (2005) reported evidence of DNA damage in peripheral lymphocytes of workers exposed to lead using the comet assay. Xie et al. (2005) reported lead chromate induced DNA damage in human lung cells, and this was confirmed by another study, by Holmes et al. (2006), in human bronchial fibroblasts. In human lymphocytes exposed to lead nitrate, a dose-dependent increase in the COMET tail length (indicative of DNA damage) was observed (Woźniak and Blasiak, 2003; Pasha Shaik et al., 2006).

Valverde et al. (2001, 2002) reported single-strand breaks and genotoxicity in mice. Robbiano et al. (1999) reported DNA strand breaks in fish exposed to lead.

### Summary

There is growing epidemiological human cancer evidence for inorganic lead and cancer, specifically cancer of the lung, since the last evaluation. There was already a finding of *sufficient* evidence that inorganic lead compounds induce tumours in experimental animals. There appears to be evidence, including in exposed humans, that inorganic lead compounds induce genotoxicity. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of inorganic lead compounds to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 062 Metallic nickel (CAS No. 7440-02-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Metallic nickel was previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 49 in 1990 (IARC, 1990a), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Metallic nickel was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of findings for lung cancer in humans and of mechanistic evidence of KCs, including for genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, and oxidative stress.

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C, nickel compounds were classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), based on human and animal evidence (IARC, 2012c). For human evidence, it was stated that “mixtures that include nickel compounds and nickel metal” cause cancers of the lung and of the nasal cavity and paranasal sinuses (IARC, 2012c). For animal evidence, it was concluded that there is *sufficient* evidence for carcinogenicity in animals for metallic nickel. The overall evaluation (Group 1) pertains only to nickel compounds.

Despite the data described above, the conclusions of the Working Group on the carcinogenicity in humans or animals were not carried over into an overall evaluation for metallic nickel. Thus, the overall conclusion in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C is that nickel compounds are *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) (IARC, 2012c), while metallic nickel is classified as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B).

In the US NTP *14th Report on Carcinogens* (RoC) (NTP, 2021f), metallic nickel was “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen”, on the basis of *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity from studies in experimental animals.

It is somewhat unusual in IARC evaluations of metals to have two separate evaluations, one for the metallic form (the pure element) and one for all compounds combined. Usually, a holistic approach has been adopted, by classifying the metal and the compounds together (see other metals included in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C: beryllium and cadmium). For cobalt, instead, an approach with a separate evaluation for each form has been taken, with separate evaluations for cobalt metal (without tungsten carbide

or other metal alloys), soluble cobalt(II) salts, cobalt(II) oxide, cobalt(II,III) oxide, cobalt(II) sulfide, and other cobalt(II) compounds (IARC, 2023b).

### Exposure characterization

Nickel metal is listed by the OECD (2007) and the US EPA (2024a) as a high production volume chemical. Metallic nickel is widespread in nature and occurs in air, water, and soil (Genchi et al., 2020). Occupational exposure occurs in a variety of settings, including in the industries that produce and use nickel (e.g. alloy and stainless-steel production, electroplating and electrowinning, welding) (IARC, 2012c). Exposure to metallic nickel was reported to be higher in nickel-producing industries than in nickel-consuming industries, with mean inhalable levels in the range of 0.01–6 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in nickel-producing industries and 0.05–0.3 mg/m<sup>3</sup> in nickel-consuming industries (IARC, 2012c). 90% of all nickel is used in the production of stainless steel and other nickel-containing alloy, in which oxidic and metallic nickel are the primary forms of nickel exposure (Sivulka, 2005). For workers, the main exposure route is through inhalation, but ingestion and dermal absorption can also be involved (IARC, 2012c).

Nickel is present in the environment (air, water, soil) in the form of nickel compounds, such as salts, oxides, or different nickel-containing minerals (IARC, 1990a). The general population is exposed to nickel through the ingestion of food and drinking-water, as the primary route of exposure, and through inhalation from ambient air (IARC, 2012c); however, this is unlikely to be metallic nickel (IARC, 1990a; EFSA CONTAM Panel (EFSA Panel on Contaminants in the Food Chain) et al., 2020).

### Cancer in humans

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C (IARC, 2012c), few studies were identified as presenting separate effect estimates for metallic nickel. In most occupational and environmental studies, exposure to various forms of nickel occurs, and it is difficult to separate the effects of individual forms in epidemiological studies.

One study in workers in a nickel refinery in Clydach, UK, attempted to separate the effects for various forms of nickel (metallic, soluble, oxidic, sulfidic); the best-fitting model showed increased lung cancer risk for metallic nickel and soluble nickel (Easton et al., 1992). However, uncertainty remained over the role of metallic nickel, as the model without metallic nickel did not have a significantly worse fit than the best-fitting model. Sivulka et al. (2014) updated the exposure assessment for this Welsh cohort (1953–2000), providing a job-exposure matrix with percentage of exposure to various form of nickel, including metallic nickel, and indicated the need of an updated analysis of the Welsh cohort using the job-exposure matrix.

A nested case–control study in a Norwegian nickel refinery, conducted by Grimsrud et al. (2002), showed an increased lung cancer risk associated with high metallic nickel exposure (OR, 2.4; 95% CI, 1.1–5.3); however, the association was attenuated (OR, 0.9) after adjustment for water-soluble nickel.

A study by Arena et al. (1998) among US nickel alloy workers showed an elevated but small increase in lung cancer risk associated with metallic nickel exposure, but such exposure was in combination with nickel oxide, which the Working Group for *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C considered to be the primary exposure.

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C, only one cohort was identified as exposed to metallic nickel in the absence of other forms of nickel (the Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant), but this cohort had a small sample size (814 workers) and used plutonium workers as a comparison group (Cragle et al., 1984). Other studies reviewed by Sivulka (2005) for metallic nickel were not considered to provide evidence for carcinogenicity for metallic nickel because of their small sample size and the mixed exposure scenario (IARC, 2012c). Since *IARC Monographs* Volume 100C, few new analyses in occupational studies are available that evaluate metallic nickel separately. A recent case–control study of multiple myeloma nested within an update of the Oak Ridge Gaseous Diffusion Plant (follow-up 1985–1998,  $n = 47\,941$ ) found no association between nickel metal and multiple myeloma (Yiin et al., 2009); however, no updated analysis on this cohort was published

for lung cancer or nasal cancer. A recent pooled analysis of 14 case–control studies from Europe and Canada (the SYNERGY analysis) found an OR for lung cancer in men associated with nickel exposure of 1.29 (95% CI, 1.15–1.45) but was unable to stratify by type of nickel (Behrens et al., 2023).

An update of the Ontario nickel mining and refinery workers has recently been published, reporting mortality for lung cancer, nasal cancer and other respiratory and non-respiratory cancers (Lightfoot et al., 2017; Seilkop et al., 2017). Results are presented by employment area, duration of employment, and decade of employment, but no results by form of nickel exposure are presented, given the lack of reliable exposure information (Seilkop et al., 2017). The available exposure information indicates that the prevalent exposures in this cohort were to nickel compounds (Seilkop et al., 2017). These results are of limited informativeness for nickel metal evaluation in the absence of a quantitative characterization of the exposure.

Large studies on PM<sub>2.5</sub> and cancer risk, exploring the effect of a nickel component in PM<sub>2.5</sub>, are likely to be minimally informative, as the nickel component to PM<sub>2.5</sub> includes nickel compounds (Hvidtfeldt et al., 2021b; So et al., 2023).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 2012c), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of nickel metal. Metallic nickel caused tumours in two rodent species, at several different tissue sites, and by several different routes of exposure. Metallic nickel increased the incidence of adrenal pheochromocytomas in male rats and adrenal cortex tumours in female rats, when administered by inhalation. Lung tumours were also observed in rats that had been exposed to metallic nickel powder by intratracheal administration (Oller et al., 2008). In addition, metallic nickel caused local tumours in rats when administered by injection (intratracheal, intrapleural, subcutaneous, intramuscular, intraperitoneal) (Hueper, 1952, 1955; Mitchell et al., 1960; Heath and Daniel, 1964; Furst and Schlauder, 1971; Berry et al., 1984; Sunderman, 1984; Judde et al., 1987; Pott et al., 1987, 1990).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Numerous mechanistic studies relevant to the KCs are available. Observational studies showed positive correlations between DNA damage marker 8-OHdG and (human) 8-oxoguanine DNA glycosylase (hOGG1) levels among workers in a nickel-smelting plant who were routinely exposed to different forms of nickel. The amount of DNA damage increased with increasing employment length and was related to the inhibition of hOGG1 repair capacity (Wu et al., 2015b). In nickel electroplating workers, significantly lower levels of anti-oxidants GSH, catalase were observed in workers with an exposure to high nickel levels compared with those with a lower exposure to nickel; however, only GSH showed an independent association after multivariable adjustment (Tsao et al., 2017). Chromosomal aberrations have been observed in workers occupationally exposed to nickel (Senft et al., 1992). In human cell lines in vitro, nickel metal particle powder induced DNA strand breaks, as well as a significant increase in intracellular ROS production in bronchial epithelial cells (Åkerlund et al., 2018; Di Bucchianico et al., 2018), and inflammation in THP-1 monocytic cells (Åkerlund et al., 2019). Nickel can bind ionically to cellular components, including DNA. The reduction–oxidation activity of the nickel ion may produce ROS that attack DNA, and exposure to nickel ion in vitro or in vivo can result in the production of 8-OHdG in target tissues for cancer caused by nickel (IARC, 1990a, Kasprzak et al., 1990; Lu et al., 2005; Chen and Costa, 2017; NTP, 2021f). Nickel, in various forms, has been shown to induce epigenetic alterations in blood samples. It induces hypermethylation of in the promoter region of tumour suppressor genes such as E-cadherin and p16 in workers with regular exposure to nickel (Yang et al., 2014), and by altering global histone post-translational modifications in PBMCs from workers in a nickel-smelting plant (Ma et al., 2015) and workers of a nickel refinery (Arita et al., 2012a, b), and in other experimental systems, both in vitro and in vivo (Zhang et al., 2013a; Chen et al., 2019a; Jose et al., 2019).

## Summary

In the occupational studies available, it has been difficult to disentangle the effect of metallic nickel from that of other nickel compounds, given that exposure in industries rarely occurs solely for metallic nickel. The Norwegian and Welsh refinery cohorts each showed an increased risk of lung cancer for metallic nickel; however, uncertainty remains over the role of co-exposure to other nickel compounds.

The available mechanistic data suggest that nickel exhibits KCs. Increased DNA damage, inhibition of DNA repair, epigenetic alterations, and oxidative stress have been observed in exposed workers and in human cell lines. However, these workers were known to be exposed to different forms of nickel and probably to other metals as well. No studies in human primary cells exposed to metallic nickel have been identified. The uncertainty as to whether the exposure is specific to the metallic form of nickel and not to other nickel compounds in the occupational studies in humans limits the relevance of the resulting mechanistic evidence for a proper evaluation of the agent. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of metallic nickel to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 063 Aluminium (CAS No. 7429-90-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Aluminium, as a metal, has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Aluminium production, as a manufacturing process, has been classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), with *sufficient* evidence for cancers of the bladder and lung. However, these findings were considered most likely to be due to heavy exposure to PAHs in this industry. Aluminium was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a). However, the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities noted that exposure in aluminium production is confounded by exposure to other carcinogenic agents, such as PAHs and smoke. WHO conducted an evaluation for aluminium in 2009 for the preparation of guidelines on drinking-water quality (WHO, 2009a). JECFA carried out a risk assessment in 2011 and specified a PTWI of 2 mg/kg bw (FAO/WHO, 2011b).

### Exposure characterization

Aluminium is listed by the OECD (2007) and the US EPA (2024a) as a high production volume chemical. Aluminium is widely distributed in the environment in the form of silicates or hydroxides, in (trivalent)  $\text{Al}^{3+}$  ions, formed by weathering of rocks. Aluminium compounds are used in water treatment, leather tanning processes, the manufacture of cooking utensils, and in fireworks, explosives, cosmetics, and pharmaceuticals. Occupational exposure to aluminium is associated with mining, smelting, welding, and scrap metal recycling. Human exposure is mainly through inhalation (of the fumes during production) and ingestion from food additives and drinking-water. Dermal absorption through cosmetics is another possible route of exposure.

### Cancer in humans

Several epidemiological studies have suggested an association of aluminium compounds in antiperspirants with a risk of benign diseases in the breast (Darbre et al., 2013; Darbre, 2016) and a risk of lung and bladder cancer in smelters (Maltseva et al., 2016). However, the association is not yet clear.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals exposed to aluminium were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Several studies have shown that aluminium compounds induce oxidative stress and lipid peroxidation (Kaneko et al., 2007; Exley et al., 2010). There is evidence of immunosuppression induced by exposure to aluminium (Yu et al., 2019a). Aluminium is also considered proinflammatory, inducing organ inflammation in rodents (Pineton de Chambrun et al., 2014; Gherardi et al., 2016).

### Summary

At present, there does not appear to be convincing evidence from any of the evidence streams to warrant an evaluation of aluminium. It is important to note that all the aforementioned studies and observations were for aluminium compounds, such as  $\text{AlCl}_3$  or aluminium phosphate, and not metallic aluminium. Although there are studies indicating metallic aluminium exposure, there is little evidence linking this exposure to cancer in humans or experimental animals. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of aluminium is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 064 Selenium and selenium compounds (CAS No. 7782-49-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Selenium and selenium compounds have been previously evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). The International Program on Chemical Safety has published a report on the health effects of selenium and selenium compounds (WHO, 1991).

Selenium and selenium compounds were given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of cancer bioassay evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Selenium is a naturally occurring element, with exposures occurring through food, water, and soil. Selenium is thought to have hormetic effects, with nutritional value at low doses (Bjørklund et al., 2022). For adults, the average daily recommended selenium intake is 55 µg (Institute of Medicine, 2000), and an upper limit of 255 µg/day has been established (EFSA Panel on Nutrition, Novel Foods and Food Allergens (NDA) et al., 2023). Sources of selenium in the diet include meat, eggs, and nuts (Kieliszek, 2019). Occupational exposures to selenium occur in several industries, including glass-making, pharmaceutical production, and semiconductor industries (Göen et al., 2015).

### Cancer in humans

Many epidemiological studies have considered populations, including children and adults, with varying selenium levels. The majority of studies for many types of cancer yield conflicting findings, with many of the more recent results showing no effect or a protective effect with increasing selenium levels. As a consequence of these findings, a series of randomized clinical trials were conducted to evaluate the efficacy of chemoprevention by dietary selenium supplementation. However, these trials did not show a detectable reduction in cancer risk, but instead, unexpectedly, indicated an excess of some histotypes of prostate cancer (Klein et al., 2011; Yarmolinsky et al., 2018). Two studies published since the review of Yarmolinsky et al. (2018) did not identify a risk of the development of prostate cancer with higher selenium levels (Van Hemelrijck et al., 2019; Outzen et al., 2021). An updated literature search (2019–2023) was conducted to evaluate epidemiological studies associated with selenium levels and cancer development. Most of the

studies did not show a dose–response relation between serum concentrations of selenium and cancer development. In fact, many of the studies continued to purport a protective effect (i.e. higher serum concentrations of selenium resulted in a smaller risk of cancer development), including some meta-analyses and reviews for breast and liver cancers (Gong et al., 2019; Zhu et al., 2021b). These continued contradictory findings obscure interpretation as to the potential carcinogenicity of different forms of selenium, which would be challenging in an evaluation by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Animal bioassays published before 1987 were evaluated in Supplement 7, with the conclusion that there was *inadequate* evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals (IARC, 1987a). A gavage study from the US NTP (1980) was positive but was not reviewed. In that study, selenium sulfide was found to be carcinogenic for F344 rats and female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice, inducing HCC in male and female rats and female mice and bronchioloalveolar carcinoma and adenoma (combined) in female mice. Selenium sulfide was not found to be carcinogenic for male mice. Dermal application of selenium sulfide did not result in cancer in mice (NTP, 1980). Several studies focusing mostly on the suspected cancer-protective effects of selenium have been published since then. The results of these studies have been mixed; both suppression and promotion of carcinogenic lesions have been reported (see e.g. studies by Ankerst and Sjögren, 1982; LeBoeuf et al., 1985; Perchellet et al., 1987; Birt et al., 1988, 1989; Woutersen et al., 1999; Chen et al., 2000; Novoselov et al., 2005; Su et al., 2005). No new cancer bioassays supporting carcinogenicity in experimental animals were published since the last nomination, in 2019.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There are many studies relevant to KCs, including genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, oxidative stress, and immunological effects (e.g. Cemeli et al., 2006; Letavayová et al., 2006; Santos et al., 2009; Uğuz et al., 2009; Brozmanová et al., 2010; Valdiglesias et al., 2010; Lee and Jeong, 2012; Lv et al., 2021a). However, as with the carcinogenicity data, many of the available studies focus on the suspected cancer-protective mechanisms of selenium intake. Although there is also evidence on the genotoxic effects of excess selenium (Brozmanová et al., 2010; Valdiglesias et al., 2010), the database on the mechanisms of toxicity of excess selenium intake is still less abundant, compared with the number of studies related to the potential beneficial effects of selenium and their mechanisms (Lv et al., 2021a; Tsuji et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

There are continued mixed findings for the relation between selenium exposure and many types of cancer in humans. The human cancer study data would be unlikely to support a determination of at least *limited* evidence. Two long-term animal carcinogenicity studies are available, suggesting the carcinogenicity of selenium. The available mechanistic evidence is inconsistent and does not support the evaluation or a change in the classification of the agent. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of selenium and selenium compounds to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## **065 Dental amalgam**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Dental material was previously reviewed by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 74 in 1999 (IARC, 1999a).

## Exposure characterization

Dental amalgams are commonly used to repair cavities and delay tooth decay around the world. Formulations for dental amalgams vary but they typically comprise approximately 40–50% inorganic mercury and other major metal components (5–70%), including tin, copper, and silver (Berry et al., 1994; IARC, 1999a; Jirau-Colón et al., 2019). Other minor metal components (< 5%) have included indium, zinc, and palladium (Berry et al., 1994). Dental amalgams have been in use for at least 150 years in both adults and children (Richardson et al., 2011; Jirau-Colón et al., 2019; WHO, 2021c; Yin et al., 2021). In the USA, amalgams are more prevalent in older adults, with non-amalgam usage more prevalent in children and adults aged < 40 (Beltrán-Aguilar et al., 2023). Exposure to inorganic mercury has been of the highest concern, owing to continued release from dental amalgams to form mercury vapour that can be inhaled (US FDA, 2021). Although dental amalgams release inorganic mercury vapour, some evidence has suggested that it can be methylated and biotransformed into organic mercury compounds through interaction with oral bacteria (Mueller, 2006; Jirau-Colón et al., 2019; US FDA, 2021). Occupational exposures to inorganic mercury through dental amalgams have also been noted in dental personnel (Nagpal et al., 2017; Tuček et al., 2020).

## Cancer in humans

Only a couple of epidemiological studies were identified in humans since the last IARC evaluation of dental amalgams in 1999 (IARC, 1999a). In a retrospective cohort study of members of the New Zealand Defence Force (29 680 with dental records), no associations with cancer and dental amalgams were reported (Bates et al., 2004; Bates, 2006). A study of 490 individuals with dental amalgam fillings evaluated the relation between timing of first amalgam placement and age at cancer onset and concluded that there was a statistically significant earlier age of cancer onset for colon, breast, endometrial, cervical, and testicular cancers, and for a pool of 14 other cancers, for patients who had amalgam fillings earlier in life, compared with those who had fillings later in life (Mueller, 2006), although this may have been due to an age-cohort effect (Mannetje, 2006).

## Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals caused by dental amalgam were identified. The earlier IARC evaluation on mercury concluded that the evidence regarding cancer in experimental animals was *inadequate* for metallic mercury, *limited* for mercury chloride, and *sufficient* for methylmercury (IARC, 1993b). No new carcinogenicity studies in experimental animals for metallic or inorganic mercury were available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

There are a few studies suggesting genotoxicity and oxidative stress in humans with dental amalgam fillings or other dental restorative materials (Bloching et al., 2008; Di Pietro et al., 2008; Mary et al., 2018; Trutina Gavran et al., 2023). There are experimental studies performed with mercuric dichloride, showing genotoxic effects for soluble inorganic mercury (Al-Saleh et al., 2012). Methylmercury and inorganic mercury have been shown to cause epigenetic effects (Gadhia et al., 2012; Goodrich et al., 2013). Some studies have compared the ability of amalgam and alternative materials to cause local inflammation (Nadarajah et al., 1996; Chandwani et al., 2014). Mechanistic data dissociating the effects of amalgam from those of mercuric dichloride are not clear.

## Summary

Dental amalgams have been widely used around the world for over 150 years. Only a few studies have evaluated the evidence of cancer in humans, and the evidence is minimal. Similarly, animal carcinogenicity

data are lacking for dental amalgam, although components (e.g. metallic mercury, methylmercury) have been previously evaluated by IARC. The mechanistic evidence relevant for carcinogenicity is sparse. Overall, the available data are unlikely to result in a change in the IARC classification. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of dental amalgam is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 066 Phosphorescent paints

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Phosphorescent paints [e.g. strontium aluminate plus europium (in paints); zinc sulfide plus copper (in face paints)] have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Few studies were identified that evaluated exposures to phosphorescent paints and face paints. Huang et al. (2023a) reviewed the properties of mechanoluminescent strontium aluminate materials and discussed the use of powder paints incorporating strontium aluminate and europium since the 1960s, including uses in cathode ray tubes and lamps. Given the mechanoluminescent properties of these mixtures, they are also used in many consumer products, such as glow-in-the-dark sporting equipment (Huang et al., 2023a), often used by children. Several methods of industrial production exist for these materials and involve the formation of powders and gels that could presumably result in occupational exposures, although no direct exposure studies were identified. No consumer-based studies were identified on powders incorporating strontium aluminate and europium either.

Few studies were identified for face paints incorporating zinc sulfide and copper (also often used by children). Face paints containing these compounds are approved by the US FDA, with indications that they should not be used around the eyes and are intended for use on “limited, infrequent occasions” (US FDA, 2000). In addition, these products should not contain more than 10% by weight of zinc sulfide and should be free from other impurities, such as copper, lead, arsenic, mercury, and cadmium.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Yellowtail damselfish were exposed indirectly to light from a white fluorescent bulb (photoperiod groups: 12 hours of light and 12 hours of darkness or 14 hours of light and 10 hours of darkness) or directly to a long-afterglow phosphorescent pigment for 4 months. In the phosphorescence-exposed group, plasma concentrations of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH), LH, and estradiol-17 $\beta$  (E2) were significantly higher than those in either photoperiod group. In addition, mRNA and protein expression of gonadotropin hormones [GTHs, including GTH $\alpha$  and LH $\beta$ ], ER, and vitellogenin of the phosphorescence-exposed group were significantly higher than those in the photoperiod groups (Choi et al., 2015). However, this study did not include proper unexposed controls.

### Summary

No data for phosphorescent paints are available for the evaluation of cancer in humans or experimental animals. There is no mechanistic evidence that phosphorescent paints exhibit KCs. The Advisory Group



therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of phosphorescent paints is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 067 Rare earth elements

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Rare earth elements have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

The rare earth elements (REEs) are a group of 17 elements that have similar chemical properties: lanthanum (La), cerium (Ce), praseodymium (Pr), neodymium (Nd), promethium (Pm), samarium (Sm), europium (Eu), gadolinium (Gd), terbium (Tb), dysprosium (Dy), holmium (Ho), erbium (Er), thulium (Tm), ytterbium (Yb), lutetium (Lu), scandium (Sc), and yttrium (Y). REEs are critical for many applications related to semiconductors, luminescent molecules, catalysts, batteries, and many others (Salfate and Sánchez, 2022). Of these elements, cerium is the most abundant in the Earth's crust. Cerium carbonate, cerium phosphate, cerium silicate, and cerium (hydr)oxide minerals have been mined and processed for pharmaceutical uses and industrial applications and, in more recent years, for CeO<sub>2</sub> nanoparticles in industrial applications (Dahle and Arai, 2015). In 2022, China accounted for more than two thirds of the total global REE production. Second and third were the USA (14%) and Australia (6%) (Statista, 2024). REEs may also be recovered from e-waste (Ramprasad et al., 2022).

REEs in soils in mining areas can contaminate surrounding ecosystems and groundwater and may enter the human body through several exposure pathways, especially food ingestion (Li et al., 2013a). For example, most of the REEs studied have been determined in wines (Marengo and Aceto, 2003). Gadolinium is used as contrasting agent in medicine (see agent 068); it is then excreted in urine, and has been found in wastewater treatment plants, so may be present in water sources (Salfate and Sánchez, 2022). For example, gadolinium-based contrast agents were traced and found in drinking-water at several water plants in Germany (Birka et al., 2016a, b) up to 159 pmol/L (Birka et al., 2016b). Exposure to REEs may also occur in cigarette smoke; higher levels of REEs have been found in both active and passive smokers (Na et al., 2022).

### Cancer in humans

Few observational human studies have been found on REEs and the risk of cancer. A case-control study on oral cancer in China, in which 33 trace elements in blood samples were investigated, found positive associations for lanthanum, praseodymium, europium, and dysprosium levels, whereas negative associations were observed for cerium, samarium, scandium, and yttrium (Wang et al., 2022a). A study on tongue cancer in China showed positive associations for lanthanum, praseodymium, and dysprosium, and inverse associations for cerium and scandium (Wang et al., 2023e).

### Cancer in experimental animals

No published studies on cancer in experimental animals after exposure to rare earth metals were available to the Advisory Group. As part of an EU-funded NANoREG project (Regulatory testing of Nanomaterials; RIVM, 2023), a combined chronic and carcinogenicity whole-body inhalation study has been performed with cerium dioxide nanoparticles (not cerium); results on the cancer are not published yet and the test substance may behave differently from pure cerium. The Advisory Group noted that this study is performed on nanoparticles, not on the nominated agent.

## Mechanistic evidence

Cerium oxides, mainly in the form of nanoparticles, have been most widely studied among the rare earth metal compounds. Several in vitro genotoxicity studies suggest genotoxicity of cerium oxide nanoparticles in human primary cells (e.g. Könen-Adıgüzel and Ergene, 2018). Also, in vivo genotoxicity data exist, with both positive (Kumari et al., 2014a, b; Nemmar et al., 2017) and negative (Cordelli et al., 2017) findings. Some studies have also included microsized particles and reported differences in the genotoxic response between micro- and nanosized cerium oxide particles (Kumari et al., 2014a). It has been suggested that cerium oxide nanoparticles induce oxidative stress and inflammation both in vitro and in vivo (e.g. Nemmar et al., 2017; Gosens et al., 2014; Hong et al., 2014; Schwotzer et al., 2017, 2018). When compared with cobalt oxide nanoparticles, immunological responses to cerium oxide nanoparticles were less pronounced in human bronchial cells in vitro (Verstraelen et al., 2014).

Although some studies have suggested oxidative damage and genotoxicity of lanthanum, two recent in vivo genotoxic studies reported negative outcomes (Yang et al., 2016a; Han et al., 2021). One study evaluated the ability of lanthanum oxide nanoparticles to induce chronic lung inflammation in mice (Sisler et al., 2016).

Some available studies on either yttrium compounds or yttrium nanoparticles suggest the induction of oxidative stress or genotoxic effects (or both) (Panyala et al., 2019; Xiong et al., 2022).

Data on the genotoxicity of gadolinium compounds is limited. Individual studies suggest DNA methylation changes and genotoxicity caused by gadolinium compounds (gadoversetamide radiocontrast agent) in experimental systems, including human primary cells (Yongxing et al., 2000; Cho et al., 2014; Liu et al., 2021a; Cobanoglu, 2022).

Data for other rare earth metals are limited, although a few individual studies exist on genotoxicity or the induction of oxidative stress by neodymium, dysprosium, praseodymium, or lutetium, or of mixtures of various REEs (e.g. Jha and Singh, 1994, 1995; Pagano et al., 2016; Hanana et al., 2021a, b; Liu et al., 2021a; Siciliano et al., 2021).

Cerium, lanthanum, and yttrium nitrates have been studied for their ability to cause immunosuppression in mice. Long-lasting effects were observed with lanthanum and yttrium after in utero and early postnatal exposure (Wang et al., 2022b; Ge et al., 2023; Yuan et al., 2023b).

## Summary

Evidence from studies of cancer in humans and experimental animals is scarce. A few studies suggest that some REEs exhibit KCs. In particular, mechanistic data suggest that cerium oxide nanoparticles exhibit several KCs. Gadolinium-based radiocontrast agents (agent 068) have also been considered separately in the present report. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of REEs is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 068 Gadolinium-based contrast agents

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Gadolinium-based contrast agents (GBCAs) have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Gadolinium is a rare earth metal widely used for various industrial and medical purposes, particularly in magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) of the brain. GBCAs have been widely used since the late 1980s. Three

MRI contrast agents were approved for clinical use in the USA as of 1994. Six more MRI GBCAs were approved by the US FDA for clinical use from 1995 through 2017: gadopentetate dimeglumine, gadodiamide, gadoteridol, gadoterate meglumine, gadobenate dimeglumine, and gadobutrol (Ibrahim et al., 2023). GBCAs are the most common agents used in MRI and are currently used in about one in three MRI scans (Fraum et al., 2017). Globally, about 30 million procedures are carried out annually (Iyad et al., 2023). Two GBCAs are not approved for contrast-enhanced MRI of the CNS. Gadofosveset trisodium was indicated for the visualization of abdominal or limb vessels in adults but was withdrawn in Europe in 2011 by request of the marketing authorization holder (US FDA, 2008; EMA, 2011). Gadoxetic acid-enhanced MRI is currently the most efficient method for the detection and analysis of focal liver lesions (Ichikawa and Goshima, 2024). Gadoxetate disodium is used exclusively in MRI of the liver (Knipe, 2023).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

GBCAs are administered intravenously and are mostly eliminated via the kidneys. Recently, residual gadolinium has been found within the brain tissues of patients who received multiple doses of GBCAs over their lifetimes. For reasons that remain unclear, gadolinium deposition appears to occur preferentially in certain specific areas of the brain, even in the absence of clinically evident disease and in the setting of an intact blood–brain barrier. Excretion into breast milk of GBCAs and gastrointestinal absorption from ingested breast milk by an infant are expected to be extremely low (ACR, 2023).

A series of studies in human primary cells and experimental systems have reported that GBCAs can induce DNA damage, oxidative stress, and inflammatory responses. For example, gadoversetamide, lanthanum(III), and gadolinium(III) induced an increase in micronucleus formation in human lymphocytes (Yongxing et al., 2000; Cobanoglu, 2022). Lanthanum(III) and gadolinium(III) were observed to induce increase in DNA single-strand breaks and UDS (Yongxing et al., 2000). Similar findings were reported in human lymphocytes by Cho et al. (2014), who also observed increases in apoptotic cell death and ROS production. Oxidative stress, as a sign of neurotoxicity, was observed in rat cortical neurons by Xia et al. (2011) and Feng et al. (2010). Gadolinium-induced cytotoxicity in neurons occurred via oxidative injury and endoplasmic reticulum stress-related signal transduction and it was observed to alter mitochondrial metabolism, thus inducing oxidative stress followed by apoptosis.

### **Summary**

There is no evidence regarding cancer in humans or experimental animals. The mechanistic evidence is sparse. Some evidence suggests that GBCAs might exhibit KCs, including genotoxicity (KC2) and oxidative stress (KC5), in human primary cells and experimental systems. Overall, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of GBCAs is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **069 Platinum-based chemotherapies as a mechanistic class**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Cisplatin has been previously evaluated by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). There was *sufficient* evidence in animals and

*inadequate* evidence in humans (IARC, 1987a). The evaluation had been upgraded to Group 2A based on mechanistic evidence that cisplatin induced DNA damage (IARC, 1987a). Etoposide in combination with cisplatin and bleomycin has been evaluated by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) (IARC, 2012d). No other platinum-based chemotherapies have been previously evaluated by IARC.

### Exposure characterization

Platinum-based chemotherapies are metal-based chemotherapeutic agents used in the treatment of a wide range of cancers, including cancers of the testis, bladder, cervix, ovary, gastrointestinal tract, breast, head and neck, and lung, as well as malignant mesothelioma, sarcoma, and lymphoma (NCI, 2014; Ghosh, 2019; Zhang et al., 2022a). Approved platinum-based chemotherapies include cisplatin (US FDA-approved in 1978, NCI, 2014), carboplatin (approved in 1989), and oxaliplatin (approved in 2002), which are all listed in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b) and are all administered intravenously. Other cisplatin analogues are currently being tested in clinical trials (Ghosh, 2019). Analysis of the US Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results (SEER) Medicare database shows that, among patients treated with initial chemotherapy, the use of platinum-based chemotherapeutic agents increased from 35% (2000–2001) to 59% (2012–2013). In analyses by first primary cancer, the use of platinum compounds for initial chemotherapy for oesophageal cancer increased during the study period, from 63% to 95%. In 2012–2013, platinum compounds were used for most patients receiving initial chemotherapy: small cell lung cancer, 97%; non-small cell lung cancer, 91%; cervical cancer, 96%; uterine cancer, 93%; ovarian cancer, 97%; and fallopian tube cancer, 97% (Morton et al., 2019). Exposure also occurs in occupational settings among workers involved in the production, preparation, or administration of platinum-based chemotherapies or during the clean-up of medical waste (NTP, 2021a). Cisplatin, oxaliplatin, and carboplatin are included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### Cancer in humans

Platinum-based chemotherapies have been associated with treatment-related leukaemia. This evidence comes from large cohorts of cancer survivors. In a large cohort of ovarian cancer survivors ( $n = 28\,971$ ) from Europe and North America, an increased risk of leukaemia was found for platinum-based chemotherapies (RR, 4.0; 95% CI, 1.4–11.4), with evidence of a dose–response relation (Travis et al., 1999), and for cisplatin (RR, 3.3; 95% CI, 1.1–9.4) and carboplatin (RR, 6.5; 95% CI, 1.2–36.6), when evaluated separately. These risk estimates were consistent with those reported for a cohort of testicular cancer survivors ( $n = 18\,567$ ) for platinum-based chemotherapy, mostly cisplatin (Travis et al., 2000). Reports from the US SEER database showed an elevated SMR for therapy-related myelodysplastic syndrome (tMDS) or AML associated with receipt of chemotherapy for solid tumours in a period with a high prevalence of use of platinum-based chemotherapies (Morton et al., 2019; Dores et al., 2023).

Evidence is also emerging for an increased risk of subsequent solid malignant neoplasms, particularly gastrointestinal and kidney cancers in survivors of testicular germ cell tumours during the era of platinum-based chemotherapies (Fung et al., 2013; Groot et al., 2018; Hellesnes et al., 2020), including evidence of a dose–response relation for platinum-based chemotherapies (Groot et al., 2018), and in survivors of childhood cancer (Henderson et al., 2012a; Wilson et al., 2013).

### Cancer in experimental animals

Since 1987, when *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental evidence was identified, a study from the NTP found an increased incidence of benign lung tumour (adenoma) in female mice and an increased incidence of leukaemia in both male and female rats after intraperitoneal administration of cisplatin (NTP, 2021b). Satoh et al. (1993) showed an increased incidence of benign lung tumours after intraperitoneal injection of cisplatin in female mice. In a similar study in metallothionein-I/II double-knockout mice (which

lack a metal-binding protein thought to mitigate the toxicity of various metals), a single intraperitoneal injection caused a dose-related increase in HCC (Waalkes et al. 2006). In an initiation–promotion study (Diwan et al., 1993), cisplatin injection late in gestation-initiated tumours in mice. Renal tubular dysplasia and thymic lymphoma were observed in rat offspring; in a transplacental exposure study (Diwan et al., 1995), renal cell adenomas were observed in male offspring, and HCC in both male and female offspring.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

All platinum-based compounds share the same mechanism of action, which involves the binding of platinum to DNA, causing DNA damage (formation of intrastrand and interstrand crosslinks, single-nucleotide damage of guanine), and eventually leading to apoptosis (Ghosh, 2019; Stefanou et al., 2021). Cisplatin has been reported, in a review by Ghosh (2019), to not only cause DNA damage by forming adducts with the purine bases but also to elicit receptor-mediated responses, leading to the activation of cell-apoptotic signalling pathways (Ghosh, 2019).

Platinum from platinum-based chemotherapies remains partially active when circulating in the blood and is detectable even 10 years after treatment (Tothill et al., 1992; Brouwers et al., 2008). Renal clearance is the primary means of excretion (Gerl and Schierl, 2000). Platinum-amine DNA adducts have been observed in patients treated for cancer and also in rodent tissue (Poirier et al., 1992).

Whole-genome sequencing studies have provided direct evidence for the role of platinum-based chemotherapy in the development of clonal haematopoiesis and therapy-related myeloid neoplasms, through the identification of a platinum-based chemotherapy mutational signature in treatment-related myeloid leukaemia (Boot et al., 2018; Bolton et al., 2020; Pich et al., 2021; Diamond et al., 2023). Those studies showed that platinum compound exposure strongly correlates with clonal haematopoiesis in specific DNA damage response genes TP53, PPM1D, CHEK2, similarly to topoisomerase II inhibitors and radiation (Bolton et al., 2020; Pich et al., 2021).

Cisplatin and related platinum-based therapeutics, such as carboplatin and oxaliplatin, have been shown to induce oxidative stress (Saad et al., 2004; Dasari and Tchounwou, 2014) in experimental animals. Jennerwein and Andrews (1995) has shown that cisplatin can modulate calcium signalling by receptor modulation. There is additional evidence of receptor modulation and interference in cell signalling by cisplatin in several other studies (Hayakawa et al., 2000; Winograd-Katz and Levitzki, 2006; Jones et al., 2007), as well as evidence of DNA damage (Basu and Krishnamurthy, 2010) and of cell apoptosis and modulation of gene expression (Shen et al., 2012)

### **Summary**

Most epidemiological studies have evaluated the risk of platinum-based chemotherapies, without further differentiating on the type of drug. Large and well-conducted epidemiological studies consistently showed an increased risk of leukaemia, large in magnitude and with evidence of a dose–response relation for platinum-based chemotherapies, particularly for cisplatin. Emerging evidence shows associations with the risk of kidney and gastrointestinal cancers. These findings add to evidence from whole-genome sequencing studies identifying a specific mutational profile in therapy-related myeloid neoplasm associated with earlier platinum-based chemotherapy treatment.

Reports from the NTP and several other studies on rodent models have shown the carcinogenic potential of several platinum-based drugs. There is evidence, including in exposed humans, that platinum-based drugs exhibit KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation induction. In addition, the same mechanism of action shared by all platinum-based chemotherapies would support a mechanistic class evaluation for drugs pertaining to the pharmaceutical class of platinum-based chemotherapies, given that cisplatin is currently classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A).

The Advisory Group recommends evaluating, as separate agents, cisplatin, carboplatin, and oxaliplatin, and possibly other drugs pertaining to the pharmaceutical class of platinum-based chemotherapies, in the same *IARC Monographs* volume, as they may belong to a mechanistic class.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 070 Anthracyclines as a mechanistic class

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Anthracyclines as a mechanistic class have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. However, daunomycin (daunorubicin) has been classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). Adriamycin (doxorubicin) has been classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals and *inadequate* evidence in humans; the classification had been upgraded to Group 2A on the basis of mechanistic evidence in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). A priority rating of *high* was given for “some anthracyclines” by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on human cancer evidence (IARC, 2019a). Separate nominations were also made for daunorubicin, doxorubicin, and epirubicin (see agents 071 to 073 in the present report).

### Exposure characterization

Anthracyclines are antibiotics of the class of topoisomerase II inhibitors used for cancer chemotherapy. Doxorubicin and daunorubicin are included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Doxorubicin, daunorubicin, epirubicin, and idarubicin are the four most common anthracyclines, with doxorubicin and daunorubicin having been the first used in clinical practice, in the 1970s (McGowan et al., 2017). Anthracyclines are widely used to treat solid and haematological malignancies, including breast cancer (in 32% of patients), leukaemia, lymphoma (57–70%), and childhood cancer (50–60%) (McGowan et al., 2017; Mattioli et al., 2023; Venkatesh and Kasi, 2023). In the past 20 years, in response of the need to reduce radiotherapy side-effects, the use of anthracyclines has increased, especially in children (Wang et al., 2023f).

Anthracyclines are often used together with alkylating agents and with radiotherapy, both known leukaemogenic agents (IARC, 2012d). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of these agents. All four agents mentioned (doxorubicin, daunorubicin, epirubicin, and idarubicin) are included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (IARC, 2012e; NIOSH, 2016b).

### Cancer in humans

Available studies have mainly been conducted in cohorts of cancer survivors. Anthracyclines have been associated with tMDS or AML, a rare but highly fatal outcome (Freedman et al., 2017), and also with an increased risk of solid cancer, especially subsequent breast cancer (SBC) (Lee et al., 2023c; Wang et al., 2023f).

For tMDS or AML, a pooled analysis of data from clinical trials of 9679 women with breast cancer in North America reported an HR of 5.16 (95% CI, 1.47–18.19), comparing the use of any anthracyclines against no use (Freedman et al., 2017); however, there was a limited ability to separate the effect of cyclophosphamide, an alkylating agent (classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), with *sufficient* evidence for bladder cancer, in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A in 2008 (IARC, 2012d)). In the SEER Medicare database, among 56 251 female survivors of breast cancer, an increased risk of

myelodysplastic syndrome (MDS) or AML (HR, 1.86; 95% CI, 1.33–2.61) was found for women treated using the anthracycline/cyclophosphamide regimen (Calip et al., 2015). In a cohort of 153 565 women with early-stage breast cancer within a nationwide health database for the Republic of Korea, the risk of MDS or AML was increased in patients who had ever been treated with anthracyclines compared with those who had not received chemotherapy (HR for MDS, 2.56; 95% CI, 1.60–4.10; HR for AML, 9.53; 95% CI, 4.16–21.86); however, there was a limited ability to disentangle the effect of co-exposure to alkylating agents (Lee et al., 2023c). In a nested case–control study in a cohort of French survivors of breast cancer, the use of anthracyclines (versus none) was associated with an increased risk of MDS or AML (RR, 3.11; 95% CI, 1.96–4.96), after controlling for other chemotherapy treatments, including alkylating agents (Le Deley et al., 2007). The risk was similar when stratified by type of anthracycline (epirubicin, doxorubicin) (Le Deley et al., 2007). Evidence of low leukaemogenicity of cyclophosphamide at the low cumulative doses used in modern chemotherapeutic regimens (Tallman et al., 1995; Crump et al., 2003; Balduzzi and Castiglione-Gertsch, 2005; Le Deley et al., 2007) might also indicate that cyclophosphamide may not be a strong confounder. Additionally, given that anthracycline is a topoisomerase II inhibitor, it is possible to look for specific characteristics of MDS or AML induced by topoisomerase II inhibitors (see the section on mechanistic evidence in this report, and the evaluation of etoposide in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A in 2008 (IARC, 2012d)).

For breast cancer, a recent pooled analysis of 17 903 5-year survivors of female childhood cancer included in five cohorts (Childhood Cancer Survivor Study, Dutch Childhood Cancer Survivor Study-LATER, Jude Lifetime Cohort Study, French Childhood Cancer Survivors Study, Dutch Hodgkin Late Effects cohort) and one case–control study (Swiss Childhood Cancer Survivors Study) showed a dose–response relation for cumulative doxorubicin dose with SBC risk (Wang et al., 2023f). In models fully adjusted for radiotherapy and cyclophosphamide use, doxorubicin was associated with increased SBC (HR per 100 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, 1.24; 95% CI, 1.18–1.31), daunorubicin was weakly associated with increased risk (HR per 100 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, 1.10; 95% CI, 0.95–1.29), and use (versus no use) of epirubicin was associated with increased SBC (HR, 3.25; 95% CI, 1.59–6.63). Reports from the single cohorts pooled in Wang et al. (2023f) also showed an association for the use of anthracyclines with SBC (Inskip et al., 2009; Teepen et al., 2017; Veiga et al., 2019), including evidence of a dose–response relation for anthracyclines as a group (Teepen et al., 2017; Veiga et al., 2019).

Anthracycline use has also been studied in relation to subsequent soft tissue sarcoma in some of the largest cohorts of childhood cancer survivors (Henderson et al., 2012b; Teepen et al., 2017) and in a cohort of breast cancer survivors, in which the use of any anthracycline was associated with a 3.6-fold increased risk of angiosarcoma (95% CI, 1.00–13.3) (Veiga et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of daunomycin (daunorubicin) and adriamycin (doxorubicin), from studies in rats receiving intravenous doses of these agents (e.g. Bertazzoli et al., 1971; Marquardt et al., 1976; Solcia et al., 1978; Bucciarelli, 1981).

Several studies have become available since the previous evaluation in 1987. In a study in female Sprague-Dawley rats (Howell et al., 1989), a single intravenous injection of daunorubicin (10 mg/kg) resulted in the formation of mammary tumours. When injected with morpholino adriamycin, Sprague-Dawley female rats were shown to develop mammary tumours (Westendorf et al., 1987). Chun et al. (2012) showed that intraductal administration of pegulated liposomal doxorubicin (PLD) in Her2/neu mice induced malignant mammary tumours, as observed with daunomycin and adriamycin in rats.

## Mechanistic evidence

Certain anthracyclines have been reported to be topoisomerase II inhibitors (Nitiss, 2009; Pommier et al., 2010). Pommier et al. (2010) reviewed the role of doxorubicin and other anthracyclines as inhibitors of topoisomerase, specifically topoisomerase II (alpha and beta isoforms). Similar findings have been reported by several studies, showing that doxorubicin induces DNA damage through topoisomerase II inhibition (Lyu et al., 2007; Deng et al., 2014; Linders et al., 2024). The mechanisms of action of anthracyclines include interaction with topoisomerase II, promoting growth arrest and apoptosis, and intercalation to the DNA between two adjacent pairs, inhibiting DNA and RNA synthesis (Nitiss, 2009; McGowan et al., 2017; McEnerney et al., 2017).

Anthracyclines, such as doxorubicin, have been reported to induce chromosomal aberrations in human leukocytes (Vig, 1971), such as SCE in patients treated with the drug, DNA strand breaks, chromosomal aberrations, and SCE in PBLs of patients, and also in occupational exposure to these drugs (Nevstad, 1978; Norppa et al., 1980; Wiencke et al., 1982; Tucker et al., 1990; Tompa et al., 2016). Some anthracyclines (daunorubicin, doxorubicin) have been shown to induce DNA lesions, strand breaks (Westendorf et al., 1987), oxidative stress (Sawyer et al., 1999), DNA adducts, and chromosomal aberrations (Westendorf et al., 1985).

In a recent study by Stefanova et al. (2023), human retinal pigment epithelial (RPE1) cells, when treated with doxorubicin, showed DNA strand breaks, chromatin rearrangement, and topoisomerase II inhibition (Stefanova et al., 2023). Adriamycin has been shown, using the Ames assay, to be strongly mutagenic in *Salmonella typhimurium* strains T98 and TA100 (Bhuyan et al., 1983). In mice treated with doxorubicin, dose-dependent chromatid and chromosome-type aberrations were observed (Larramendy et al., 1980).

Anthracyclines are also capable of inducing ROS in the presence of cytochrome P450 reductase, NADH, and xanthine oxidase. They also form DNA adducts (McGowan et al., 2017) and cause chromatin damage (van der Zanden et al., 2021).

Etoposide, another topoisomerase II inhibitor, has been classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A in 2008 (IARC, 2012d). AML after exposure to topoisomerase II inhibitors often presents with specific translocations on chromosomes 11 and 21 after a relatively short (2–3 years) latency, irrespective of the type of topoisomerase inhibitor (Stanulla et al., 1997; Mistry et al., 2005; McEnerney et al., 2017). This is also noted in the evaluation of etoposide in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A (IARC, 2012d), in which it is stated that AML induced by topoisomerase II inhibitors presents distinctive characteristics that allow distinctions for AML induced by alkylating agents (IARC, 2012d).

## Summary

The available evidence in humans, together with evidence related to absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion (ADME) and mechanism of action (especially topoisomerase II inhibition), suggest that different anthracyclines share similar effects. However, studies of cancer in humans often provide a risk estimate for the entire class of anthracyclines, rather than single drugs. Overall, there is a consistent positive association between anthracycline use and a risk of MDS or AML, from studies conducted in diverse geographical settings. Concern over confounding by co-exposure from cyclophosphamide seems to be minimal. The pooled analysis by Wang et al. (2023f) offers clear evidence of a dose–response relation for doxorubicin and breast cancer, and some evidence for daunorubicin, with the ability to rule out confounding by concomitant treatment. There is ample evidence from experimental studies of cancer and mechanistic end-points in animals to show that anthracyclines (doxorubicin, daunorubicin) have carcinogenic potential.



The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of anthracyclines as a mechanistic class to be warranted and recommends evaluating the individual anthracyclines doxorubicin, daunorubicin, epirubicin, and possibly idarubicin, in the same volume.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 071 Daunorubicin (anthracycline) (CAS No. 20830-81-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Daunorubicin (an anthracycline) has been previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), based on *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals. A priority rating of *high* was given for “some anthracyclines” by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on human cancer evidence (IARC, 2019a). Anthracyclines as a mechanistic class were nominated separately (see agent 070 in the present report).

### Exposure characterization

Daunorubicin is the first identified anthracycline (antibiotics of the class of topoisomerase II inhibitors used for cancer chemotherapy) and among the most common anthracyclines used (McGowan et al., 2017; Mattioli et al., 2023). It was approved by the US FDA in 1979 (NIH, 2024a). The section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report) gives further details on the use of anthracyclines. Daunorubicin is approved by the US FDA to treat non-lymphocytic leukaemia in children and adults (Saleem and Kasi, 2023). As part of the cyclophosphamide, daunorubicin, vincristine, and prednisone (CHOP) regimen, it is used to treat T-cell leukaemia (Saleem and Kasi, 2023). Off-label, daunorubicin is used to treat Kaposi sarcoma in patients with advanced HIV (Saleem and Kasi, 2023). Daunorubicin for intravenous administration is included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of daunorubicin. Daunorubicin is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### Cancer in humans

Available studies have been conducted in cohorts of cancer survivors. Most of the studies have evaluated anthracyclines together, without separate analyses for types of anthracycline. These studies are informative for the evaluation of daunorubicin, if they include a sizeable proportion of patients treated with daunorubicin. Because daunorubicin is not used to treat solid cancer, cohorts of survivors of breast cancer or other solid cancers are not informative. For more details of studies of anthracyclines as a pharmaceutical class, see the section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report).

In some of these studies, the analysis was stratified by the type of anthracycline. Notably, stratification by treatment type is possible only in very large studies, because power may be an issue. In a large pooled analysis of five cohorts of survivors of childhood cancer (Wang et al., 2023f), about 12% of the patients were exposed to daunorubicin, and the study found an association between daunorubicin and an increased risk of breast cancer; however, the risk was small (HR per 100 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, 1.10; 95% CI, 0.95–1.29).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of daunorubicin, based on studies of intravenous dosing in rats (Bertazzoli et al., 1971; Marquardt et al., 1976; Solcia et al. 1978). Two studies have become available since the previous evaluation. In a study by Howell et al. (1989), in female Sprague-Dawley rats, a single intravenous injection of daunorubicin (10 mg/kg) resulted in the formation of mammary tumours. In another study (Westendorf et

al., 1987), when injected with morpholino adriamycin, Sprague-Dawley female rats were shown to develop mammary tumours.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Westendorf et al. (1987) showed that morpholino daunomycin is weakly mutagenic in Chinese hamster cells or *S.typhimurium* but showed genotoxic effects, mainly DNA repair, in cultured rat hepatocytes. Another study by the same group (Westendorf et al., 1985) showed the formation of DNA adducts and chromosomal aberrations in rat hepatocytes exposed to daunorubicin and variants of the drug. In a study by Sawyer et al. (1999), daunorubicin was shown to induce apoptosis and oxidative stress in rat ventricular myocytes. Howell et al. (1986) showed that, in Sprague-Dawley rats, treatment with daunorubicin caused DNA lesions in mammary epithelial cells and DNA strand breaks in rat hepatocytes. No specific mechanism or ADME characteristics differed between daunorubicin and other anthracyclines (Mattioli et al., 2023).

### **Summary**

Few studies of cancer in humans are available specifically for daunorubicin, given the more limited use of daunorubicin in comparison with other anthracyclines. There is already *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals for daunorubicin. Daunomycin shares ADME characteristics and mechanisms of action with other anthracyclines in forming DNA adducts and causing DNA damage and chromosomal aberrations. As noted in the summary for anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report), the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of daunorubicin (anthracycline) to be warranted and recommends re-evaluation of daunorubicin and other anthracyclines (doxorubicin and epirubicin) in the same volume, as they may belong to the same mechanistic class.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## **072 Doxorubicin (anthracycline) (CAS No. 23214-92-8)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Doxorubicin (adriamycin) has been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). This classification was based on *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals and *inadequate* evidence in humans. The evaluation had been upgraded to Group 2A based on mechanistic evidence.

A priority rating of *high* was given for “some anthracyclines” by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on human cancer evidence (IARC, 2019a). Anthracyclines as a mechanistic class were nominated separately (see agent 070 in the present report).

### **Exposure characterization**

Doxorubicin is among the most common anthracyclines used (McGowan et al., 2017; Mattioli et al., 2023). The section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report) gives further details on the use of anthracyclines. Approved by the US FDA in 1974 (PubChem, 2024a), doxorubicin is used in the treatment of several adult and paediatric solid cancers (soft tissue and bone sarcoma, cancers of the breast, ovary, and bladder, and small cell lung cancer) and haematological cancers (ALL, acute myeloblastic leukaemia, Hodgkin lymphoma) (Johnson-Arbor and Dubey, 2023). Doxorubicin for intravenous administration is included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of doxorubicin. Doxorubicin is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

## Cancer in humans

Available studies have been conducted in cohorts of cancer survivors. Most of the studies have evaluated anthracyclines together, without separate analyses for types of anthracycline. These studies are informative for the evaluation of doxorubicin, given that doxorubicin is the most common anthracycline used (e.g. Wang et al. (2023f) use the prevalence of doxorubicin in the cohort). For more details of studies of anthracyclines as a pharmaceutical class, see the section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report).

Some of these studies have been able to stratify the analysis by the type of anthracycline. Notably, stratification by treatment type is possible only in very large studies. Large nested case–control studies in a cohort of survivors of breast cancer in France showed an elevated risk of MDS or AML for doxorubicin use (RR for ever use, 2.72; 95% CI, 1.39–5.34) (Le Deley et al., 2007). A very large pooled analysis of five cohorts of survivors of childhood cancer showed a clear dose–response relation for doxorubicin and risk of SBC (HR per 100 mg/m<sup>2</sup>, 1.24; 95% CI, 1.18–1.31), with adjustments for cyclophosphamide and radiation treatment (Wang et al., 2023f). Positive associations of doxorubicin dose with SBC were also published in some of the cohorts pooled in Wang et al. (2023f): the Childhood Cancer Survivor Study (Inskip et al., 2009; Veiga et al., 2019) and the Dutch Childhood Cancer Survivor Study-LATER (Teepen et al., 2017).

## Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of doxorubicin, based on studies of intravenous administration in rats (Bertazzoli et al., 1971; Solcia et al., 1978; Bucciarelli, 1981). One study has become available since the previous evaluation in 1987. A study conducted by Chun et al. (2012) showed that 20 µg of intraductal injection of doxorubicin induced mammary tumours in Her2/neu mice.

## Mechanistic evidence

Doxorubicin has been reported to induce chromosomal aberrations in human leukocytes (Vig, 1971), for example, SCE in patients treated with the drug (Tucker et al., 1990). There were also reports of DNA strand breaks, chromosomal aberrations, and SCE in PBLs of patients and nurses handling the cytotoxic drugs in other studies (Nevstad, 1978; Norppa et al., 1980; Wiencke et al., 1982; Tompa et al., 2016). Human fibroblasts exposed to doxorubicin at 100 nM showed an increased frequency of DNA strand breaks and DNA crosslinks (Lambert et al., 1983).

Pommier et al. (2010) reviewed the role of doxorubicin (and other anthracyclines) as inhibitors of topoisomerase, specifically topoisomerase II (alpha and beta isoforms). Similar findings have been reported by several studies, which show that doxorubicin induces DNA damage via topoisomerase II inhibition (Lyu et al., 2007; Deng et al., 2014; Linders et al., 2024).

In a recent study by Stefanova et al. (2023), human RPE1 cells, when treated with doxorubicin, have shown DNA strand breaks, chromatin rearrangement, and topoisomerase II inhibition (Stefanova et al., 2023). Doxorubicin has been shown to be strongly mutagenic, using the Ames assay, in *Salmonella typhimurium* strains T98 and TA100 (Bhuyan et al., 1983). In mice treated with doxorubicin, dose-dependent chromatid and chromosome-type aberrations were observed (Larramendy et al., 1980).

## Summary

Few epidemiological studies, of those available exploring the association between anthracyclines and cancer, were able to stratify by type of anthracycline treatment. The pooled analysis by Wang et al. (2023f) offers clear evidence of a dose–response relation for doxorubicin and breast cancer, with the ability to rule out confounding by concomitant treatment. Notably, such analyses are difficult to conduct in single cohort studies, so large cohorts are needed to disentangle the effect of each cancer therapeutic agent. The previous

evaluation of doxorubicin has been that there is *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals (IARC, 1987a). In addition, there is emerging mechanistic evidence in exposed humans, human cells, and experimental systems of genotoxic and mutagenic effects of doxorubicin, which could support a change in classification. As noted in the summary for anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report), the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of doxorubicin (anthracycline) to be warranted and recommends evaluation of doxorubicin together with other anthracyclines in the same volume, as they may belong to the same mechanistic class.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 073 Epirubicin (anthracycline) (CAS No. 56420-45-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Epirubicin, an anthracycline, has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Adriamycin (doxorubicin), another anthracycline, has been classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals and *inadequate* evidence in humans; the classification had been upgraded to Group 2A on the basis of mechanistic evidence (IARC, 1987a). A priority rating of *high* was given for “some anthracyclines” by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a). Anthracyclines as a mechanistic class were nominated separately (see agent 070 in the present report).

### Exposure characterization

The section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report) gives further details on the use of anthracyclines. Approved by the US FDA in 1999 (Chaurasia et al., 2023), epirubicin is administered intravenously and is used to treat cancers of the breast, gastrointestinal and genitourinary tracts, sarcomas, and lymphomas (Mattioli et al., 2023). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of epirubicin. Epirubicin is also included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### Cancer in humans

Available studies have been conducted in cohorts of cancer survivors. Most of the studies have evaluated anthracyclines together, without separate analyses for types of anthracycline. These studies are informative for the evaluation of epirubicin, depending on the prevalence of use of epirubicin in these studies. For more details on studies of anthracyclines as a pharmaceutical class, see the section on anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report).

Some studies have been able to stratify the analysis by the type of anthracycline. Notably, stratification by treatment type is possible only in very large studies. Large French nested case–control studies in a cohort of breast cancer survivors showed an elevated risk of MDS or AML for epirubicin use, similarly to doxorubicin and anthracyclines combined (Le Deley et al., 2007). In 7110 patients with early breast cancer, who were enrolled in a trial for adjuvant therapy with epirubicin, a higher planned epirubicin dose/cycle, a higher planned epirubicin dose intensity, and higher administered cumulative doses of epirubicin and cyclophosphamide were associated with an increased risk of AML or MDS (Praga et al., 2005).

Use (versus no use) of epirubicin was associated with an increased risk of breast cancer (HR, 3.25; 95% CI, 1.59–6.63) in a very large pooled analysis of five cohorts of childhood cancer survivors (Wang et al., 2023f).

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

No specific mechanism or ADME characteristics differ between epirubicin and other anthracyclines (Mattioli et al., 2023). There are reports of circulating epirubicin modifying inflammasomes and causing immunomodulation and cytotoxicity (Eakin et al., 2020). There have not been many studies of epirubicin specifically in animals or humans for carcinogenic mechanistic evidence.

### Summary

Few epidemiological studies were able to stratify by type of anthracycline treatment to evaluate epirubicin. There is some evidence of an association of epirubicin with MDS and AML. Despite the absence of a dose–response analysis in Wang et al. (2023f), the magnitude of the risk estimates and adjustment for concomitant chemotherapy or radiotherapy offers compelling evidence of an association between epirubicin and with the risk of SBC. Notably, large cohort sizes are needed to better disentangle the effect of each cancer therapeutic agent.

There are no experimental bioassays to support epirubicin as a carcinogen and there is very sparse information on mechanism of action.

As noted in the summary for anthracyclines as a mechanistic class (agent 070 in the present report), the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of epirubicin (anthracycline) to be warranted and recommends an evaluation of epirubicin and other anthracyclines (doxorubicin and daunorubicin) in the same volume, as they may belong to the same mechanistic class.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 074 Textured implants

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Breast implants made of silicone have been evaluated as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 74 in 1999 (IARC, 1999a), based on *evidence suggesting lack of carcinogenicity* of breast implants made of silicone in humans for female breast cancer, and *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals regarding the carcinogenicity of breast implants made of silicone. Textured breast implants were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on emerging findings of anaplastic large-cell lymphoma (a rare malignancy) in patients receiving these implants.

### Exposure characterization

Breast (mammary) implants are used in breast augmentation, as well as reconstruction after mastectomy (Pittet et al., 2005). These medical devices differ in the compositions of their shells (e.g. silicone or other) and fillers (e.g. gel or saline) and in their textures (e.g. smooth, modified, coated) (Bondurant et al., 2000). Foreign substances have been used to augment or reconstruct the breast for over 100 years, and silicone breast implants were introduced in the early 1960s (Bondurant et al., 2000). The use of textured breast implants peaked in 2016 in the USA (16%) and then declined to 0% in 2021 (Stein et al., 2023); in contrast, textured implants are still widely used in Sweden (84%) (BRIMP, 2020).

Breast augmentation is the most common cosmetic surgical procedure in women, with more than 2.2 million procedures in 2022 (ISAPS, 2022). Their use is widespread around the world, including in middle-income countries, such as Brazil, but there is a lack of high-quality data to formally estimate prevalences and trends (Jalalabadi et al., 2021). In the UK, a newly established Breast and Cosmetic Implant Registry recorded more than 20 000 patients as having at least one breast implant operation between October 2016 and June 2018 (NHS England, 2018). A Dutch registry was established in 2015, with more than 38 000

implants in 18 000 women recorded (Becherer et al., 2019), and data from four national breast implant registries including 207 189 implants are also now available (Becherer et al., 2023).

### **Cancer in humans**

In 1997, a case of a rare malignancy – anaplastic large-cell lymphoma (ALCL) – was reported adjacent to a breast implant in a survivor of breast cancer. In 2016, the WHO Classification of Tumours programme labelled this new variant breast implant associated ALCL (BIA-ALCL), with specific diagnostic criteria (Alaggio et al., 2022). As of 30 June 2023, the US FDA has received 1264 reports of BIA-ALCL, with approximately half coming from the USA and half from outside the USA (US FDA, 2023a). While still very rare, the incidence of BIA-ALCL is reported to be increasing in several countries, including the USA (Kinslow et al., 2022a, b) and Australia and New Zealand (Magnusson et al., 2019).

In a Dutch case–control study of 11 cases of breast ALCL and 35 matched controls with other types of lymphoma the OR for breast implants was 18.2 (95% CI, 2.1–156.8) (de Jong et al., 2008). Wang et al. (2016) subsequently reported an 11-fold increased risk of ALCL in women with breast implants in the prospective California Teachers Study, based on 2 cases, compared with 10 cases in those without implants. In an expanded Dutch registry study in 2018, based on 43 cases of breast ALCL, 32 were found from medical records to have ipsilateral breast implants, resulting in an OR of 421.8 (95% CI, 52.6–3385.2) (de Boer et al., 2018). Of note, almost all cases had arisen in conjunction with a textured implant, as opposed to a smooth type of implant, despite the substantially greater number of smooth implant types in current use. The average interval between implant placement and diagnosis was estimated to be 10 years. The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities also noted emerging case reports for gluteal (buttock) implants (e.g. Shauly et al., 2019), which may warrant a broadening of this agent to consider cosmetic implants more generally.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Early tumour initiation and promotion studies in rodents had reported that implants of various materials can induce carcinogenesis, specifically fibrosarcoma, through foreign-body carcinogenesis (Moizhess and Vasiliev, 1989); however, these studies were limited to body implants. In another study, James et al. (1997) reported that two different forms (gel or elastomer) of silicone implant induce fibrosarcoma in rats. Full carcinogenicity studies in rodents for textured implants since the previous IARC evaluation were not available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Studies related to some KCs are available. Specifically, chronic inflammation involving enhanced cytokine production (CD30, IL-10, IL-13) has been considered as an important mechanism in exposed humans (see e.g. Bizjak et al., 2015; Kadin et al., 2020; Hu et al., 2023). Alterations in the Janus kinase signal transducer and activator of transcription 3 (JAK-STAT3) pathway associated with cell proliferation (KC10) and mutations in PI3K-Akt/mTOR and loss-of-function mutations in the *TP53* tumour suppressor gene have been suggested to play a role in carcinogenicity related to breast implants (Laurent et al., 2020; DeCoster et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

The new human cancer data support an IARC review, as they could lead to a new classification for textured implants, including for implantation sites other than the breast. A positive initiation–promotion study reviewed by the previous Working Group in 1999 has been considered by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities. The new criteria of the *IARC Monographs* Preamble may lead to a new evaluation of the evidence of cancer in experimental animals.

There are also mechanistic data supporting epidemiological evidence and evaluation of silicone breast implants. Inflammation resulting in alterations in cell proliferation is considered the relevant mechanism of cancer caused by silicone breast implants.

The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation to be warranted and recommended focusing an evaluation only on the textured type of implant, but expanding the evaluation to sites of implantation beyond the breast (e.g. buttocks); thus, the proposed evaluation would be for textured implants.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## **075 BRAF inhibitors – dabrafenib (CAS No. 1195768-06-9)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Dabrafenib has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Dabrafenib is an inhibitor of BRAF (B-Raf proto-oncogene, serine/threonine kinase, or v-raf murine sarcoma viral oncogene homologue B1). It is a protein kinase involved in cell signalling pathways and plays a critical role in transmitting signals within the cell. It is a standard treatment option for patients with metastatic melanoma harbouring a V600 mutation, which occurs in 60% of melanomas (Chen et al., 2019b). Combination with anti-MAPK kinase (MEK) agents (trametinib) has become a standard of care, as this combination is thought to reduce the risk of secondary skin cancer (Dhillon, 2016; Gouda and Subbiah, 2023a). The US FDA approved a combination of dabrafenib and trametinib for melanoma (adult, stage III, with V600 mutation), non-small cell lung cancer, anaplastic thyroid carcinoma, and low-grade paediatric glioma; moreover, this US FDA approval was extended in 2023 to adults and paediatric patients with unresectable or metastatic solid tumours with BRAF V600E mutation as a tissue-agnostic indication (Gouda and Subbiah, 2023a). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of dabrafenib, but no studies could be identified. Dabrafenib is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### **Cancer in humans**

The cutaneous toxicity profile of dabrafenib, including the risk of cutaneous SCC, is well known from clinical trial observations. In a recent meta-analysis, the overall prevalence of cutaneous SCC in patients receiving monotherapy of dabrafenib was 16% (95% CI, 11–24%) and that in patients receiving dabrafenib in combination with trametinib was 10% (95% CI, 4–22%) (Peng and Jie-Xin, 2021). A meta-RR including studies comparing combination therapy against monotherapy gave a RR of 0.4 (95% CI, 0.18–0.89), indicating that the combined therapy reduced the risk of cutaneous SCC, compared with monotherapy (Peng and Jie-Xin, 2021).

Genotyping studies of cutaneous SCC or other skin cancers that developed in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors have shown a distinct mutational profile in tumours that developed in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016). These observations have supported the hypothesis of a molecular mechanism involving a paradoxical activation of MAPK signalling. Indeed, the combination with anti-MEK agents (e.g. trametinib) has become the standard of care; however, it remains unclear whether this combination is truly effective in preventing skin cancer (Larkin et al., 2014; Boussemart et al., 2016; Gouda and Subbiah, 2023a).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No cancer bioassays were identified that assessed the induction of cancer after in vivo treatment with dabrafenib. Grigore et al. (2020) developed a transgenic mouse model for melanoma, which allows for the

temporal control of mutant BRAF expression with doxycycline and is able to mimic human BRAF-inhibition induced cancers. This has been used to study the mechanisms of cancers after BRAF inhibition (Grigore et al., 2020).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mutations in the BRAF gene, resulting in uncontrolled cell proliferation, are commonly observed in melanomas. Dabrafenib is an inhibitor of BRAF serine-threonine kinase, which can inhibit mutated BRAF kinase-driven cell proliferation. Resistance to dabrafenib (and other BRAF inhibitors) and paradoxical activation of the RAF/MEK/ERK pathway, resulting in oncogenesis, is a phenomenon that has been studied in experimental systems (Kakadia et al., 2018). The available studies are largely focused on elucidating the genetic or epigenetic mechanisms related to BRAF-inhibitor resistance formation and paradoxical oncogenesis (e.g. Grigore et al., 2020) and include both studies in experimental systems (e.g. Grigore et al., 2020; Jandova and Wondrak, 2022) and the mutational profiling of human cancers observed after treatment with BRAF inhibitors (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016). Dabrafenib is also known to have photosensitizing properties. According to a drug safety evaluation report by the European Medicines Agency (EMA), dabrafenib is not genotoxic (European Medicines Agency, 2024a).

### **Summary**

The evidence of cutaneous SCC induced by dabrafenib in human cancer studies is based on its high prevalence, as reported in clinical trials and on distinct mutational patterns observed in studies of BRAF inhibitors. Given the available information, including mechanistic data supporting findings in humans, the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of dabrafenib to be warranted. The Advisory Group recommends evaluating dabrafenib, encorafenib, and vemurafenib together in the same volume.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## **076 BRAF inhibitors – encorafenib (CAS No. 1269440-17-6)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Encorafenib has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Encorafenib is a second-generation BRAF inhibitor, approved for patients with metastatic melanoma harbouring a V600 mutation, which occurs in 60% of melanomas (Chen et al., 2019b; Carr et al., 2020). The US FDA approved a combination of encorafenib and binimetinib for melanoma in 2018 (Shirley, 2018). Combination with anti-MEK agents (e.g. binimetinib) has become a standard of care, because BRAF-inhibitor monotherapy has been linked with oncogenic activity, owing to the MAPK paradoxical activation pathway; therefore, combination with anti-MEK agents is thought to reduce the risk of secondary skin cancer (Gouda and Subbiah, 2023b). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of encorafenib, but no studies were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in humans**

Cases of cutaneous SCC were seen in patients treated with encorafenib in clinical trials (Hauschild et al., 2012; Carr et al., 2020), similar to observations for other BRAF inhibitors, such as dabrafenib and vemurafenib (agents 075 and 077 in the present report) (Chen et al., 2019b; Peng and Jie-Xin, 2021). Genotyping studies of cutaneous SCC or other skin cancers that developed in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors have shown a distinct mutational profile in tumours that developed in patients treated with BRAF



inhibitors, supporting a molecular mechanism involving a paradoxical activation of MAPK signalling (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016), as discussed below. For this reason, the combination with anti-MEK agents has become the standard of care in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors; however, it remains unclear whether this combination is truly effective in preventing skin cancer (Larkin et al., 2014; Boussemart et al., 2016; Gouda and Subbiah, 2023b).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No cancer bioassays to assess the induction of cancer after in vivo treatment with encorafenib were available to the Advisory Group. Grigore et al. (2020) developed a transgenic mouse model for melanoma, which allows for the temporal control of mutant BRAF expression with doxycycline and is able to mimic human BRAF-inhibition induced cancers. This has been used to study the mechanisms of cancers after BRAF inhibition (Grigore et al., 2020).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mutations in the BRAF gene, resulting in uncontrolled cell proliferation, are commonly observed in melanomas. Encorafenib is an inhibitor of BRAF serine-threonine kinase, which can inhibit mutated BRAF kinase-driven cell proliferation. Resistance to encorafenib (and other BRAF inhibitors) and paradoxical activation of the RAF/MEK/ERK pathway, resulting in oncogenesis, is a phenomenon that has been studied in experimental systems (Kakadia et al., 2018). The available studies are largely focused on elucidating the genetic or epigenetic mechanisms related to BRAF-inhibitor resistance formation and paradoxical oncogenesis and include both studies in experimental systems (e.g. Grigore et al., 2020; Jandova and Wondrak, 2022) and the mutational profiling of human cancers observed after treatment with BRAF inhibitors (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016). Encorafenib is also known to have photosensitizing properties. According to EMA's drug safety evaluation report, encorafenib is not genotoxic (European Medicines Agency, 2024b).

### **Summary**

The evidence of SCC induced by encorafenib in human cancer studies is based on the high prevalence of cutaneous SCC reported in clinical trials and on the results of mutational profile studies on BRAF inhibitors. Given the available information on human cancer and mechanistic evidence, the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of encorafenib to be warranted. The Advisory Group recommends evaluating dabrafenib, encorafenib, and vemurafenib in the same *Monographs* volume.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## **077 BRAF inhibitors – vemurafenib (CAS No. 918504-65-1)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Vemurafenib has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Vemurafenib is a BRAF inhibitor, and a standard treatment option for patients with metastatic melanoma harbouring a V600E mutation, which occurs in 60% of melanomas (Chen et al., 2019b). Patients with melanoma receiving BRAF inhibitors are treated in combination with anti-MEK agents (e.g. cobimetinib) as a standard of care, because BRAF-inhibitor monotherapy has been linked with oncogenic activity, owing to the MAPK paradoxical activation pathway; therefore, combination with anti-MEK agents is thought to reduce risk of secondary skin cancer (Gouda and Subbiah, 2023a). Vemurafenib is currently being considered for treatment for other cancers (e.g. cancers of the breast or prostate or urothelial cancer) (Chen

et al., 2019b). It was approved by the US FDA in 2011 (Kim and Cohen, 2016). Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of vemurafenib, but no studies could be identified. Vemurafenib is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### **Cancer in humans**

The development of cutaneous SCC is a well-documented secondary effect in clinical trials of vemurafenib (Kim and Cohen, 2016). A recent meta-analysis estimated the overall prevalence across vemurafenib trials for the development of cutaneous SCC to be 18% (95% CI, 12–26%) (Chen et al., 2019b). After drug approval, a multicentre international observational study began to test the efficacy of the drug in clinical practice (44 countries,  $n = 3226$ ); 12% of patients developed cutaneous SCC after beginning treatment with vemurafenib, within a median period of 2.6 months (Kim and Cohen, 2016). Also, three cases of cutaneous T-cell lymphoma were recorded (Kim and Cohen, 2016).

Because of the observed increased risk of cutaneous SCC, which is hypothesized to be due to an MAPK paradoxical activation pathway, combination with anti-MEK agents has become the standard of care; however, it remains unclear whether this combination is truly effective in preventing skin cancer (Larkin et al., 2014; Boussemart et al., 2016; Gouda and Subbiah, 2023a).

Genotyping studies of cutaneous SCC or other skin cancers that developed in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors have shown a distinct mutational profile in tumours that developed in patients treated with BRAF inhibitors, supporting the hypothesis of a molecular mechanism involving a paradoxical activation of MAPK signalling (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No cancer bioassays to assess the induction of cancer after in vivo treatment with vemurafenib were available to the Advisory Group. Grigore et al. (2020) developed a transgenic mouse model for melanoma, which allows for the temporal control of mutant BRAF expression with doxycycline and is able to mimic human BRAF-inhibition induced cancers. This has been used to study the mechanisms of cancers after BRAF inhibition (Grigore et al., 2020).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Mutations in the BRAF gene, resulting in uncontrolled cell proliferation, are commonly observed in melanomas. Vemurafenib is an inhibitor of BRAF serine-threonine kinase, which can inhibit mutated BRAF kinase-driven cell proliferation. Resistance to vemurafenib (and other BRAF inhibitors) and paradoxical activation of the RAF/MEK/ERK pathway resulting in oncogenesis is a phenomenon that has been studied in experimental systems (Kakadia et al., 2018). The available studies are largely focused on elucidating the genetic or epigenetic mechanisms related to BRAF-inhibitor resistance formation and paradoxical oncogenesis and include both studies in experimental systems (e.g. Grigore et al., 2020; Jandova and Wondrak, 2022) and the mutational profiling of human cancers observed after treatment with BRAF inhibitors (Oberholzer et al., 2012; Su et al., 2012; Boussemart et al., 2016). In a recent study by Jandova and Wondrak (2022), enhancement of tumorigenesis and metastasis after treatment with vemurafenib was seen in BRAFV600E/NRASQ61K-recipient mice injected intracardially with A375 melanoma cells.

Vemurafenib is also known to have photosensitizing properties (Kim and Cohen, 2016). According to the EMA's drug safety evaluation report, vemurafenib is not genotoxic (European Medicines Agency, 2024c).

### **Summary**

The evidence of cutaneous SCC induced by vemurafenib in human cancer studies is based on its high prevalence, as reported in clinical trials and on observations of distinct mutational profiles. Given the available information on cancer in humans and mechanistic evidence, the Advisory Group considered an

*IARC Monographs* evaluation of vemurafenib to be warranted. The Advisory Group recommends evaluating dabrafenib, encorafenib, and vemurafenib in the same *Monographs* volume.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 078 Tetracycline (CAS No. 60-54-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tetracycline has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Tetracyclines and other photosensitizing drugs, as a group, were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on findings from cancer in human studies and mechanistic evidence of photosensitivity.

### Exposure characterization

Tetracycline is one of the most-used of the broader class of tetracycline antibiotics. They are widely used for the treatment of many infectious diseases, off-label to treat *Helicobacter pylori* infections, and as a sclerosing agent for pleurodesis (Shutter and Akhondi, 2023). They are also used in the treatment of acne and skin conditions, resulting in potential longer-term exposure. Tetracycline is listed in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Workers may also be exposed during the manufacture or handling of tetracycline.

### Cancer in humans

Typically, epidemiological studies have focused on the class of tetracyclines, rather than tetracycline per se. As noted by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), a large study combining three US cohorts (Nurses' Health Study, Nurses' Health Study 2, Health Professionals Follow-Up Study) showed an association between self-reported use of tetracycline (the drug) and non-melanoma skin cancer (NMSC) in the three cohorts (Li et al., 2018). In another study, an association was found between the class of tetracyclines and NMSC in a nationwide record-linkage study in Denmark (Kaae et al., 2010). Another US-based case-control study provides additional evidence for BCC, especially early-onset BCC, with exposure to the class of tetracyclines (Robinson et al., 2013). No additional studies addressing the risk of skin cancer were found.

Tetracyclines have been evaluated for their association with colon cancer, under the hypothesis that an alteration of the microbiome can induce cancer; however, results were null (Zhang et al., 2019b; Murphy et al., 2023). Some positive results for an association for the class of tetracyclines with breast cancer were reported (Friedman et al., 2006; Simin et al., 2020); however, there is evidence of potential confounding by indication (Velicer et al., 2004), because tetracyclines are used to treat rosacea, which is suspected to indicate a predisposition to an increased risk of breast cancer, owing to alterations in sex hormonal levels and chronic inflammatory status (Long et al., 2019; Velicer et al., 2004). The indication of tetracyclines to treat skin disorders may also challenge the interpretation of findings for NMSC.

### Cancer in experimental animals

A feeding study of tetracycline hydrochloride in male and female rats and mice, conducted by the US NTP, was negative (NTP, 1989a).

### Mechanistic evidence

Tetracycline is known to induce photosensitivity and increase the vulnerability of the epidermis and dermis to damage induced by UV radiation (Blakely et al., 2019). Tetracycline was found to inhibit mitochondrial function, leading to decreased mitochondrial translation and adenosine triphosphate (ATP)

production via oxidative phosphorylation, increased levels of  $\text{NADH}^+$  and mitochondrial ROS in  $\text{CD4}^+$  T cells, and  $\text{CD4}^+$  T-cell proliferation (Franz et al., 2022). Tetracycline induced oxidative stress, liver injury, mitochondrial cristae and rough endoplasmic reticulum swelling, and early apoptosis in HL-7702 liver cells (Liu et al., 2019). In addition, tetracycline treatment induced significantly higher levels of expression of caspases CASP3 and CASP9 (pro-apoptosis), SOD3 and GPX3 (antioxidant enzymes), and transforming growth factor alpha (TGFA) and IL1B (inflammatory) genes in human retinal MIO-M1 cells (Salimiaghdam et al., 2022). The expression of antioxidant indices and immune-related genes was suppressed in zebrafish exposed to oxytetracycline (5 mg/L) for 48 hours (Yu et al., 2019b). Exposure to tetracycline activated the NF- $\kappa$ B pathway and induced an NF- $\kappa$ B-mediated immune response in fish primary macrophages, showing elevated endogenous ROS generation, antioxidant enzyme activity, and cytokine expression (Qiu et al., 2020). Moreover, a significant reduction in the percentage of T lymphocytes and the key cytotoxic and T helper subpopulations, and elevation of the absolute number of leukocytes (especially lymphocytes, but also granulocytes and monocytes) were found in tetracycline-treated mice (Grabowski et al., 2023). The hepatic gene expression involved in lipid transport (e.g. APOA4 and FABP11) and lipogenic factors (e.g. PPAR) was significantly upregulated in the livers of tetracycline-exposed zebrafish (Keerthisinghe et al., 2020).

### Summary

A few large studies have shown an increased risk of NMSC or BCC associated with tetracycline exposure; however, these are mainly based on self-reported information or on exposure to the class of tetracyclines. Positive findings have been reported regarding exposure to the class of tetracyclines and breast cancer; however, concerns exist on confounding by indication. Negative results regarding cancer in experimental animals were reported. There is evidence that tetracycline exhibits KCs in human primary cells or experimental systems, in particular, the induction of oxidative stress and chronic inflammation, immunosuppression, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alterations of cell proliferation or cell death.

The human cancer data available are for tetracyclines as a pharmaceutical class, while the mechanistic evidence is for the drug tetracycline. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tetracycline to be warranted and recommends the evaluation of tetracycline alone, based on the available evidence.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 079 Carbadox (CAS No. 6804-07-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Carbadox has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Carbadox (methyl (2E)-2-[(1,4-dioxidoquinoxalin-2-yl)methylene]hydrazinecarboxylate) is used in swine as an antibacterial drug for the prevention of dysentery and enteritis and as an additive for weight gain and improved feed productivity (WHO, 2003; US FDA, 2023b). No acceptable daily intake (ADI) has been established by JECFA (WHO, 2023c). The drug and some of its metabolites have been banned for use in several countries, including the EU (EU, 1998), Australia, and Canada (WHO, 2003; PubChem, 2023; US FDA, 2023b). As of 2023, it was still available for use in the USA (US FDA, 2023b). The physical state of this drug is a crystalline powder; inhalation and ingestion have been described as routes of exposure; presumably this could result in occupational exposure for veterinary and agricultural workers, although no

specific occupational exposure data were identified (INCHEM, 2003). Carbadox has been identified in urine samples obtained for biomonitoring from children in China (Wen et al., 2023) and in surface water samples collected in the USA (Ferrey et al., 2015).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Long-term regulatory studies were conducted in rodents (INCHEM, 2003; WHO, 2023c). In one study Stebbins and Coleman (1967), a treatment-related increase in total tumours was observed in rats exposed to increasing concentrations of carbadox (0–100 mg/kg bw per day) in the diet for 26 months. Also, carbadox exposure, in feed or intraperitoneally, induced an increased incidence of hepatic tumour in rats exposed for 1 year (Sykora and Vortel, 1986). In addition, in another long-term study in rats, the metabolite desoxycarbadox was reported to induce an increase in the incidence of tumours after 10 months exposure in the diet: the most pronounced change occurred in the liver; tumour incidence was also elevated at other sites, including the skin and mammary glands (King, 1976).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Positive findings were reported in several genotoxicity studies in experimental systems (INCHEM, 2003; WHO, 2023c). A study on rat liver cells (Kimura et al., 2016) indicated cell proliferation activity, expression of molecules related to the G<sub>2</sub> to M phase and spindle checkpoint, and apoptosis at weeks 2 and 4, and tumour promotion activity at week 6. The carcinogenicity of carbadox is related to mutagenicity (Suarez-Torres et al., 2021), genotoxicity (Liu et al., 2016b), and the induction of aberrant cell cycle regulation and apoptosis in rats (Kimura et al., 2015).

### **Summary**

No data are available on cancer in humans. There is evidence that carbadox and its metabolite induce liver tumours in experimental animals. There is some mechanistic evidence suggesting that carbadox exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, and alteration of cell proliferation, cell death, or nutrient supply. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of carbadox to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## **080 Paracetamol (acetaminophen) (CAS No. 103-90-2)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Paracetamol (also referred to as acetaminophen) has been previously evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 73 in 1998 (IARC, 1999b).

### **Exposure characterization**

Paracetamol is listed as a high production volume chemical by OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Paracetamol is one of the most-used analgesics and antipyretics around the world, and many countries have reported increasing sales over recent decades (e.g. Wastesson et al., 2018).

### **Cancer in humans**

There have been many studies of paracetamol and kidney cancer, summarized most recently in a meta-analysis by Karami et al. (2016). Regular use of paracetamol was associated with a 25% increased risk of

kidney cancer in this meta-analysis of nine case-control and four cohort studies (95% CI, 10%–41%). There were increased risks for both cohort and case-control studies. There was a dose-response relation with increasing duration of use for over-the-counter paracetamol in a US kidney cancer case-control study (10 years use versus no use, OR, 2.01; 95% CI, 1.30–3.12), but no clear trend with duration in the Prostate, Lung, Colorectal, and Ovarian Cancer (PLCO) Screening Trial cohort (although there were few long-term users) (10 years use, RR, 1.14; 95% CI, 0.65–2.01) (Karami et al., 2016). An earlier pooled analysis of case-control studies did not report a clear association, but the number of regular users was smaller at that time (McCredie et al., 1995). A smaller number of studies have evaluated the risk of liver cancer, including several cohort studies that found an increased risk for regular users, e.g. UK Biobank (Tian et al., 2024), the UK's Clinical Practice Research Datalink (Yang et al., 2016b), and a Danish cohort study (Friis et al., 2002).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of paracetamol. In IF strain mice, exposure to paracetamol in the feed for 18 months significantly increased the incidence of total liver tumours in male and female mice and HCCs in male mice (Flaks and Flaks, 1983). Flaks et al. (1985) studied the induction of bladder and liver tumours by paracetamol in the feed in the rat. Paracetamol induced bladder carcinoma in three rats. A low yield of tumours at various other sites also arose after paracetamol feeding. Paracetamol was not found to be carcinogenic in male or female F344/DuCrj rats when administered in pelleted diets (Hiraga and Fujii, 1985). Hasegawa et al. (1988a) studied the tumour-initiating effect of paracetamol in two-stage liver carcinogenesis of male F344 rats. The potential liver-tumour-initiating activity of paracetamol was investigated in male F344 rats. Paracetamol was administered by intragastric intubation, either as 10 doses over 5 weeks or as a single dose 24 hours after two thirds partial hepatectomy. These initiating treatments were followed by the administration of 0.1% phenobarbital in drinking-water for 12 weeks as the promoting regimen. No tumour-initiating activity was observed in the rat liver. Paracetamol in the diet for 104 weeks in rats and mice significantly increased the incidence of mononuclear cell leukaemia in female rats but did not induce any tumours in mice (NTP, 1993).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Some published data show that paracetamol causes chromosomal damage in vitro in mammalian cells at high concentrations and indicate that similar effects occur in vivo at high dosages (Bergman et al., 1996). In 2019, the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment reviewed the carcinogenic hazard potential of paracetamol and concluded that there was no clear evidence that paracetamol causes DNA damage in the absence of toxicity (Kirkland et al., 2021). Experiments conducted by Flaks et al. (1985) showed that paracetamol induces foci of cellular alteration in the livers of high-dose mice of both sexes, and also in low-dose male mice, suggesting cellular proliferation. Hu et al. (2016a) studied non-toxic doses of paracetamol in mice and concluded that paracetamol could cause transient mitochondrial dysfunction that might synergize with other stresses to promote liver damage and steatosis. Xu et al. (2023a) showed that inhibitor of NF- $\kappa$ B kinase subunit epsilon (IKBKE)-deficient mice treated with paracetamol exhibited severe liver injury, worsened mitochondrial integrity, and enhanced GSH depletion, compared with wildtype mice.

### **Summary**

Consistent positive associations between paracetamol (acetaminophen) use and kidney cancer were found in several well-conducted epidemiological studies, with evidence of a dose-response relation. There is also emerging epidemiological evidence for an association with liver cancer in humans. Animal studies of paracetamol showed an increased incidence of liver cancer in male and female mice and of mononuclear cell leukaemia in female rats. These new human cancer and animal studies may support a change in *IARC*

*Monographs* classification. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of paracetamol (acetaminophen) to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **081 Anaesthetics (volatile): isoflurane (CAS No. 26675-46-7), sevoflurane (CAS No. 28523-86-6), desflurane (CAS No. 57041-67-5)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Anaesthetics (volatile) have been previously evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity in humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### **Exposure characterization**

Isoflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane pertain to the class of halogenated inhaled anaesthetics, used in clinical and veterinary medicine (Pokhrel and Grady, 2021). Isoflurane and sevoflurane are included in the 2023 WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Exposure occurs in patients and in workers (Mulvenon, 2015). In clinical and veterinary operating theatres, exposure can occur through inhalation at low concentrations (Pokhrel and Grady, 2021). Dermal exposure in occupational settings can also occur (Pokhrel and Grady, 2021).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans evaluating risk from exposure to isoflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane were available to the Advisory Group. Indirect evidence from studies evaluating cancer risk in medical professionals with a higher likelihood of exposure to these anaesthetics may be considered; however, there are inconsistent results across studies. Those studies are also difficult to interpret, given co-exposure in medical professions to other known or probable carcinogens (ionizing radiation, antineoplastic agents, NSW) and probable healthy worker biases (IARC, 1987a; Carpenter et al., 1997; Alexander et al., 2000; Frittschi, 2000).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Male and female Swiss/Webster mice aged 8 weeks were exposed to either air ( $n = 181$ ), 0.1% isoflurane ( $n = 167$ ), or 0.4% isoflurane ( $n = 165$ ), for 4 hours/day, 5 days/week, for 78 weeks. Throughout most of the study, the mean body weights of mice exposed to 0.1% isoflurane were lower by 1–5% and the mean body weights of mice exposed to 0.4% isoflurane were lower by 5–8%. There were no statistically significant differences between the groups for the number of mice with a particular tumour at a specific site, the ratio of benign to malignant tumours, or the time to tumour appearance (Baden et al., 1988).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Anaesthetists exposed to an 8-hour TWA of 0.2 ppm sevoflurane experienced an increase in SCE in their lymphocytes (Wiesner et al., 2008). In human lymphocytes, isoflurane and nitrous oxide produced an increase in the rate of SCE (Hoerauf et al., 1999). The levels of DNA damage in lymphocytes and bone marrow of Sprague-Dawley rats that were exposed to isoflurane were increased (Kayser et al., 2011). In addition, increased levels of  $\gamma$ -H2AX were observed in isoflurane-exposed mice and human neuroglioma cells (Ni et al., 2017).

Isoflurane was found to decrease histone acetylation (H3K14, H4K5, and H4K12 acetylation) in the brains of adult male C57BL/6 mice (Zhong et al., 2014), to disrupt m6A-regulated genes in the brains of male and female neonatal mice (Wu et al., 2023a), and to increase miRNA 21 in human ovarian epithelial carcinoma cell lines SKOV3 and TOV21G (Guo et al., 2017).

Sevoflurane was found to disrupt m6A-regulated genes (Wu et al., 2023a), and to alter the expression of miRNA in the liver of rats (Ishikawa et al., 2012) and in A549 cancer cells (Wang et al., 2018a).

A systematic review concluded that anaesthesia induces oxidative stress in the brains of neonatal patients (Gascoigne et al., 2022). In addition, the peripheral lymphocytes in patients exposed to sevoflurane (2%) had increased DNA damage and decreased GSH content (Lee et al., 2015). In animal studies, protein oxidation levels were significantly increased in the plasma, brains, and lungs of rats exposed to isoflurane (Kayser et al., 2011).

Isoflurane has been shown to increase ROS accumulation in H4 human neuroglioma cells and primary neurons from C57BL/6J mice (Zhang et al., 2010), mouse hippocampus neurons (Zhang et al., 2012a), and isolated rat heart mitochondria (Hirata et al., 2011).

Anaesthesia with 3% sevoflurane for 2 hours daily for 3 days induced neuroinflammation in juvenile but not adult mice (Shen et al., 2013). On postnatal day 7 (P7), littermate mouse (C57BL6/J) pups were exposed to 1.5% isoflurane in 2.5% sevoflurane for 4 hours; levels of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, and TNF $\alpha$  were significantly increased at 0, 4, or 24 hours after exposure to isoflurane (Zhao et al., 2020b). Isoflurane and sevoflurane increased IL-6 and NF- $\kappa$ B levels in mouse microglia, but not mouse primary neurons (Zhang et al., 2013b). Treatment with 2.5% sevoflurane for 1 hour promoted mouse primary microglia polarization in the anti-inflammatory microglia/macrophage phenotype, and increased nuclear factor erythroid 2-related factor 2 (Nrf2) nuclear expression and GSK-3 $\beta$  phosphorylation against oxygen–glucose deprivation (Cai et al., 2021). Isoflurane reduced the levels of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, TNF $\alpha$ , macrophage inflammatory protein 2 (MIP2), iNOS, and nuclear NF- $\kappa$ B in a mouse model of zymosan-induced inflammation (Lee et al., 2015), and also reduced brain ischaemia or reperfusion-induced NF- $\kappa$ B, IL-1 $\beta$ , and IL-6 in the ischaemic penumbral brain tissues (Li et al., 2013b).

Volatile anaesthetics have been shown to suppress innate immunity by impairing or suppressing neutrophil adhesion, monocytes, macrophages, and NK cells, and affecting resident cells in tissues, such as platelets and microglial cells. Volatile anaesthetics also suppressed adaptive immunity by decreasing the proliferation of lymphocytes such as CD4<sup>+</sup> and CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells, as well as B cells (Stollings et al., 2016). Desflurane decreased the counts of NK cells in the blood of 20 breast cancer surgery patients (Woo et al., 2015). Desflurane anaesthesia for breast cancer surgery induced an adequate immune response (Pirbudak Cocelli et al., 2012). Sevoflurane increased serum estradiol and corticosterone levels in rats (Li et al., 2020b).

## Summary

Only sparse and indirect evidence from studies of cancer in humans is available. There is a lack of data on the carcinogenicity of the three anaesthetics in experimental animals. There is evidence that the three agents exhibit multiple KCs. There is available data showing genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, oxidative stress, and immunosuppression in exposed humans, human primary cells, or experimental systems. Overall, the data available could support an evaluation of isoflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of isoflurane, sevoflurane, and desflurane to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 082 Methamphetamine (CAS No. 537-46-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Methamphetamine has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.



## Exposure characterization

Methamphetamine is a highly potent amphetamine (INN name, amphetamine)-type stimulant (Courtney and Ray, 2014). It is approved by the US FDA for the treatment of attention deficit hyperactivity disorder (ADHD) and obesity (DEA, 2020). However, its major use is as an illicit recreational drug, with various routes of exposure (smoking, snorting, intravenous injection, peroral). Inhalation exposure may occur through smoking or in contaminated homes used for clandestine manufacture (Wright et al., 2021). Amphetamine-type stimulants are the second most common class of illicit drug used worldwide, and their use may be increasing (Courtney and Ray, 2014). Methamphetamine is probably the most widely consumed synthetic drug in the world (UNODC, 2023). Occupational exposure has been described in workers training dogs in drug detection (Stout et al., 2006).

## Cancer in humans

An elevated incidence of HCC was reported in users of methamphetamine in a small study that did not adequately control for known risk factors for HCC (Si et al., 2023). In patients with HIV, amphetamine use has been linked to NHL in a single large prospective study (Chao et al., 2009), but not in other case–control studies in patients with HIV (Armenian et al., 1996; Holly and Lele, 1997).

## Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

An investigation in 76 long-term users of methamphetamine and 98 unexposed controls demonstrated that total methamphetamine exposure correlated with frequencies of micronucleus and SCE in cultured lymphocytes. Meanwhile, it was also found that levels of micronucleus formation in lymphocytes of methamphetamine consumers were higher than those in non-users and increased with increasing dose (Li et al., 2003). Methamphetamine caused induction of DNA damage and chromosomal aberrations in human-derived liver and buccal cells (Ropek et al., 2019).

Takemura et al. (2022) compared patients with methamphetamine dependence and healthy controls ( $n = 24$  each) using DNA methylation profiles obtained from whole-blood samples and found that patients with methamphetamine dependency showed significant acceleration in phenotypical age and GrimAge (an estimate of biological age that is based on DNA methylation), as well as a trend for significant acceleration in DNA methylation-based telomere length (Takemura et al., 2022). Several studies documented that methamphetamine, administered at short time intervals, increases H4 acetylation (H4K5ac and H4K8ac) in the rat nucleus accumbens and striatum (Renthal et al., 2008; Martin et al., 2012; Cadet et al., 2013; Harkness et al., 2013). In addition, at the striatal level, methamphetamine-induced DNA methylation affected the gene promoters of corticosterone and glucocorticoid receptors (Numachi et al., 2004, 2007).

Methamphetamine was found to induce oxidative stress. *N*-acetylcysteine suppressed methamphetamine-induced activation of RAS/ERK1/2 pathways, leading to the arrest of HCC xenograft formation in nude mice (Si et al., 2023). Potula et al. (2010) presented evidence that methamphetamine exposure resulted in mitochondrial oxidative damage and caused dysfunction of primary human T cells. Methamphetamine treatment of T lymphocytes led to a rise in intracellular calcium levels that enhanced the generation of ROS (Potula et al., 2010). In brain endothelial cells, oxidative stress is involved in methamphetamine-induced injury of the blood–brain barrier (Ramirez et al., 2009).

Davidson et al. (2022) found that the expression of inflammatory markers was higher in the brain in methamphetamine-treated mice than in sham controls. Methamphetamine induced the expression of TNF receptor and proinflammatory cytokines (TNF $\alpha$ , IL-6) in the human dopaminergic neuroblastoma SH-SY5Y cell line, the murine BV2 microglial cell line, and a primary culture of rat embryo mesencephalic neurons

(Park et al., 2017). In addition, in highly aggressively proliferating immortalized (HAPI) cells, a rat microglial cell line, methamphetamine reduced cell viability in a concentration- and time-dependent manner and initiated the expression of IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, and TNF $\alpha$  (Tocharus et al., 2010).

Methamphetamine disrupted the immune system function, leading to the suppression of mitogen-stimulated lymphocytes, a reduction in circulating lymphocyte numbers, and alterations in T lymphocyte cytokine secretion as well as B-cell proinflammatory cytokine secretion. Kalayasiri et al. (2023) discovered that patients who used methamphetamine persistently showed a robust immunosuppressive effect for all immunological profiles in samples of peripheral blood, compared with controls (Kalayasiri et al., 2023). Mice exposed to methamphetamine had an altered G1 cell cycle phase and impaired T-cell proliferation. In addition, T-cell subsets exposed to methamphetamine showed significantly decreased expression of cyclin E, CDK2, and transcription factor E2F1, indicating that methamphetamine exposure results in altered T-cell cycle entry and progression (Potula et al., 2018).

A marked reduction of nuclear PPAR $\gamma$ -expressed cells was seen in the striatum 3 days after methamphetamine injections (4 mg/kg  $\times$  4, intraperitoneally at 2-hour intervals) in male BALB/c mice (Tsuji et al., 2009). Male Wistar rats who received an increasing regimen of methamphetamine (1–10 mg/kg, intraperitoneally, twice a day for 10 days) showed that methamphetamine-induced memory impairment is concomitant with decreased mRNA levels of thyroid hormone nuclear receptor  $\alpha$ 1 (TR- $\alpha$ 1) (Tamijani et al., 2022). In addition, mice treated once daily with 1 mg/kg methamphetamine subcutaneously for seven consecutive days exhibited significantly extended escape latency in the learning phase of a maze test and reduced the number of target crossings in the memory test phase, as well as decreasing the expression of brain-derived neurotrophic factor (BDNF), N-methyl-D-aspartate (NMDA) receptors, tropomyosin receptor kinase B/tyrosine receptor kinase B (TrkB) receptors, calcium calmodulin-dependent protein kinase II (CaMKII),  $\beta$ III tubulin, and synaptophysin (Veschanit et al., 2021). Huang et al. (2022d) found that methamphetamine upregulated  $\alpha$ -synuclein expression in neurons extended to astrocytes, thereby eliciting astrocyte activation, disrupting IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6, TNF $\alpha$ , and glial cell line-derived neurotrophic factor (GDNF) levels by downregulating nuclear receptor-related 1 (NURR1) protein expression, and ultimately damaging the blood–brain barrier.

C57BL/6 male mice (8 weeks) treated with methamphetamine by intraperitoneal injection over a 26-day period showed evidence of hypoxia, including increased levels of hypoxia-inducible factor 1 $\alpha$  (HIF1A) and VEGFa, and angiogenesis in the retina (Lee et al., 2021c). Chronic exposure to methamphetamine combined with brain infection by EcoHIV (a chimeric retrovirus construct) resulted in the enhanced proliferation of neural progenitor cells in the subventricular zone in male C57BL/6 mice (Park et al., 2021). Methamphetamine promoted cell viability and cell proliferation and in HUH7 cells (0.1, 1, or 10 nM) and HepG2 cells (1, 10, or 100 nM). In addition, methamphetamine inhibited apoptosis by decreasing the expression of cleaved caspase-3 (Si et al., 2023).

## Summary

Regarding human cancer evidence, only sparse data exist, mainly on amphetamines. There are no studies of cancer in experimental animals. There is evidence that methamphetamine exhibits KCs, in particular, for genotoxicity, alterations in epigenetics, oxidative stress, inflammation, immunosuppression, receptor-mediated effects, and alterations of cell proliferation and cell death in exposed humans and human primary cells and experimental systems. Overall, given the available data, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of methamphetamines to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **083 Reversible AChE inhibitors, such as rivastigmine, donepezil, and galantamine**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Reversible acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibitors, such as rivastigmine, donepezil, and galantamine, have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Reversible AChE inhibitors, such as rivastigmine, donepezil, and galantamine, are used to treat Alzheimer and Parkinson diseases (Colović et al., 2013). Data from Spain showed that rivastigmine is the most commonly used treatment for Alzheimer disease (37%) (including in new patients, 46%), followed by donepezil and memantine (Olazarán et al., 2023).

AChE is an enzyme associated with the cholinergic signal system; its classic role is to remove acetylcholine from acetylcholine receptors. Excessive activity of AChE causes different neuronal problems, especially dementia and neuronal cell death (Joe and Ringman, 2019). The US FDA has approved donepezil, rivastigmine, tacrine, and galantamine for the treatment of Alzheimer disease.

### **Cancer in humans**

In a matched cohort study of 116 106 users of AChE inhibitors and 348 318 controls in the Longitudinal Health Insurance Database, in Taiwan, China, the reported HR for lung cancer was 1.198 (95% CI, 0.765–1.774;  $P = 0.167$ ); among patients aged  $\geq 65$  the HR was 1.498 (95% CI, 1.124–1.798;  $P < 0.001$ ) (Liu et al., 2022d).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Song et al. (2003) demonstrated the role of acetylcholine in the growth of lung cancer cell xenografts in nude mice. No specific animal carcinogenicity data on rivastigmine, donepezil, or galantamine were available to the Advisory Group (Colović et al., 2013).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

No relevant mechanistic evidence associated with the KCs was identified.

### **Summary**

Currently, the association between AChE and cancer risk in humans has only been explored in one study, and there are minimal data on cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence. Overall, the evidence does not support an evaluation by IARC. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of reversible acetylcholinesterase (AChE) inhibitors, such as rivastigmine, donepezil, and galantamine, is unwarranted at present

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **084 Tofacitinib (CAS No. 540737-29-9) and other Janus kinase inhibitors**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Tofacitinib and other Janus kinase (JAK) inhibitors have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

## Exposure characterization

Tofacitinib is a targeted synthetic disease-modifying antirheumatic drug that inhibits JAK. It is US FDA-approved for the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis, psoriatic arthritis, ulcerative colitis, and polyarticular juvenile idiopathic arthritis (Padda et al., 2023). The drug is also approved by EMA (Hoisnard et al., 2022). The drug is included in the US NIOSH list of hazardous drugs (NIOSH, 2016b).

## Cancer in humans

The US FDA box warning for cancer events for tofacitinib was motivated by the results of the Oral Rheumatoid Arthritis Trial (ORAL) surveillance, an industry-sponsored trial (Ytterberg et al., 2022a). Observation of cancer, including lymphoma, in clinical trials was reported as a rationale for the conduct of the trial. The ORAL surveillance was a randomized, post-authorization, noninferiority trial that aimed to test the hypothesis that the risk of major events (including cancer) would not be at least 1.8× higher with tofacitinib (at doses of 5 mg or 10 mg), compared with TNF inhibitors. During a median follow-up of 4 years, the use of tofacitinib at any dosage was associated with an increased risk of any cancer (excluding NMSC) (HR, 1.48; 95% CI, 1.04–2.09), compared with TNF inhibitors. NMSC was a secondary end-point, and its incidence was found to be higher, compared with TNF inhibitors, in the groups receiving 5 mg (HR, 1.90) and 10 mg (HR, 2.16) doses of tofacitinib. There was no analysis by other cancer types. However, in response to a letter to the journal editor highlighting the importance of publishing results for lymphomas, the incidence rate for lymphoma was reported for each group (0.07 for tofacitinib at 5 mg, 0.11 for tofacitinib at 10 mg, and 0.02 for TNF inhibitors, without specifying the time period, although it may be inferred as over the entire 5.5 years of the trial period) (Ytterberg et al., 2022b).

An increased risk of overall cancer has not been consistently reported in clinical trials of JAK inhibitors; however, there is heterogeneity across trials in terms of comparators, and most of the trials have limited follow-up or sample size (Russell et al., 2023).

An industry-funded analysis of the WHO pharmacovigilance data (VigiBase) showed that adverse event reporting for skin neoplasms and leukaemias were significantly increased for several JAK inhibitors (Hoisnard et al., 2022). Also, an analysis of the US FDA adverse reporting system and another analysis of VigiBase has shown increased reporting of NMSC, melanoma, and MCC for tofacitinib and other JAK inhibitors (Jalles et al., 2022; Liu et al., 2023b). Concern over the interpretation of these findings relates to confounding by indication, as patients with rheumatoid arthritis are known to be at increased risk of lymphomas or melanomas (Smedby et al., 2006; Simon et al., 2015).

## Cancer in experimental animals

Tofacitinib was found to increase hibernoma in a dose-dependent manner in female rats at a dose range of 30–100 mg/kg per day (Radi et al., 2013).

## Mechanistic evidence

The available evidence suggests that tofacitinib is not genotoxic. It showed negative results in various assays, including the Ames bacterial reverse mutation assay, the in vitro gene mutation assay in CHO/HGPRT assay, the in vivo rat micronucleus assay, and the in vivo rat hepatocyte UDS assay. Joustra et al. (2024) conducted epigenome-wide (DNA methylome) profiling of peripheral blood cells of patients with moderate to severe ulcerative colitis who had been treated with tofacitinib and found a tofacitinib-specific epigenetic signature, suggesting potential epigenetic mechanisms underlying cancer risk.

JAK inhibition disrupted T cell-induced macrophage activation and reduced downstream proinflammatory cytokine and chemokine responses in CD14<sup>+</sup> monocytes and CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells (Nyirenda et al., 2023). In primary bone marrow-derived macrophages, the selective JAK inhibitor ruxolitinib increased TNF, IL-6, and IL-12 secretion when stimulated with LPS. This effect was primarily attributed to an ability

to block IL-10–mediated feedback inhibition on cytokine transcription in macrophages (Pattison et al., 2012).

Adult cynomolgus monkeys developed lymphomas, including two B-cell lymphomas associated with LCV, probably linked to the immunomodulatory properties of tofacitinib and reduced immune surveillance of virally infected cells (T cells, NK cells). No lymphomas were observed in juvenile monkeys (Collinge et al., 2018).

Tofacitinib treatment in amyotrophic lateral sclerosis NK cells reduced TNF $\alpha$  and IFN $\gamma$  expression. A similar effect was observed in control NK cells (Figueroa-Romero et al., 2022). In mice, tofacitinib decreased CD127<sup>+</sup> pro-B-cells, impaired germinal centre B-cell formation, and reduced germinal centre numbers (Onda et al., 2014). In a mouse model of systemic sclerosis, tofacitinib suppressed adaptive and innate immune responses, reducing splenocytes, total lymphocytes, CD4<sup>+</sup> T helper cells (especially Th2 and Th17 subtypes), IL-6-producing B-cells, and dendritic cells in the spleen. It also decreased macrophage infiltration in the skin and lungs (Aung et al., 2021). Tofacitinib exposure might impair NK cell activation and lymphoma cell killing efficacy by reducing degranulation and cytokine secretion capacity (Nocturne et al., 2020). In addition, there is evidence that tofacitinib increases herpes zoster infection in humans (Winthrop et al., 2018; Olivera et al., 2020).

In PBMCs, tofacitinib reduced IFN $\gamma$  production, proliferation, activation, and CXCR3 expression of varicella zoster virus (VZV) specific CD4<sup>+</sup> T cells in a dose-dependent manner (Almanzar et al., 2019). The drug also induced apoptosis in plasmacytoid dendritic cells (PDCs), inhibited IFN $\alpha$  production by toll-like receptor (TLR)-stimulated PDCs, and counteracted the suppressive effects of IFN $\alpha$  on viral replication (Boor et al., 2017). In human PBMCs, tofacitinib decreased lymphocyte activation and proliferation, leading to a relative reduction in NK cells, B-cells, and CD8 T cells, compared with CD4 T cells (Piscianz et al., 2014).

## Summary

Regarding human cancer studies, clinical trials or pharmacovigilance studies are available; however, they mainly focus on overall cancer as the outcome. Despite this, reporting of increases in NMSC seems consistent across the available studies. There is a lack of studies assessing the risk of lymphoma, and little information is available in the literature.

There are animal cancer bioassays showing that tofacitinib increases hibernoma in female rats. Mechanistic evidence from animal models showed the development of lymphomas in adult cynomolgus monkeys, and of increased lung cancer metastasis in an experimental lung metastasis mouse model of colon cancer.

There is evidence that tofacitinib exhibits KCs, in particular for epigenetic alterations and immunosuppression, in exposed humans, human primary cells, or experimental systems.

The available data could support an evaluation of tofacitinib and perhaps other JAK inhibitors. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tofacitinib and other JAK inhibitors to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 085 Alefacept (CAS No. 222535-22-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Alefacept has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

## Exposure characterization

Alefacept is a genetically engineered immunosuppressant for the treatment of moderate to severe chronic plaque psoriasis. It received US FDA approval in 2003, but the production of intramuscular alefacept has been discontinued, and the drug was not approved in the EU (AdisInsight, 2023). Alefacept is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b). The manufacturers withdrew this drug from the market in 2011 (LiverTox, 2021; DrugBank Online, 2024a).

## Cancer in humans

There are several case reports of lymphoma after the use of drugs in this category, but only one case was reported specifically after the use of alefacept (Dommasch and Gelfand, 2009). There are no formal epidemiological studies, but some cancers were reported as adverse events in clinical trials (Goffe et al., 2005).

## Cancer in experimental animals

In a chronic toxicity study, cynomolgus monkeys were given intravenous injections of alefacept weekly for 52 weeks. After 28 weeks, one animal in the high-dose group developed a B-cell lymphoma (Vahle et al., 2010).

## Mechanistic evidence

Cynomolgus monkeys developed B-cell hyperplasia of the spleen and lymph nodes after having received alefacept for 28 weeks. There was no evidence of alefacept-related lymphoma or B-cell hyperplasia in any of the remaining treated monkeys 1 year after treatment (Vahle et al., 2010).

The lymphocyte function associated antigen 3 (LFA-3) portion of alefacept binds to the cluster of differentiation 2 (CD2) receptor on the T lymphocytes, thereby blocking the interaction between LFA-3 and CD2. This, in turn, inhibits T cell activation and results in immunosuppression. In addition, the FcγRIII IgG portion of alefacept binds to the FcγRIII IgG receptors on NK cells and macrophages, resulting in T-cell apoptosis (Hodak and David, 2004). Numbers of epidermal T cells (CD3<sup>+</sup>) and dermal T cells decreased after 2, 6, or 13 weeks of alefacept treatment in 12 patients with psoriasis. At 13 weeks after alefacept treatment in 12 patients with psoriasis, key inflammatory IL-23 and iNOS and chemokines MIG (monokine induced by IFNγ) and IL-8 decreased (Chamian et al., 2005). Treatment with alefacept for 12 weeks in 229 patients with psoriasis reduced counts of effector memory T lymphocytes and peripheral blood effector memory T lymphocytes (CD45RO<sup>+</sup>) (Ellis and Krueger, 2001). Of 16 patients with psoriasis who received alefacept 7.5 mg once weekly for 12 weeks, the numbers of NK T cells were reduced significantly, while no statistically significant changes occurred in NK cells or CD4<sup>(+)</sup> CD25<sup>(high)</sup> cells (Larsen et al., 2007).

## Summary

The only human cancer evidence consists of a few case reports of cancers in patients in clinical trials. There are no carcinogenicity data in experimental animals. There is evidence that alefacept exhibits KCs for immunosuppression in exposed humans and human primary cells. While the available mechanistic evidence could support a classification of alefacept by an *IARC Monographs* Working Group, the Advisory Group noted there is no evidence of exposure occurring in humans because the production of this drug has ceased. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of alefacept is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 086 Anti-thymocyte globulin

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Anti-thymocyte globulin (ATG) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

ATG is an infusion of horse or rabbit-derived antibodies used to remove functional T cells to induce a nonspecific immunosuppression. Standard clinical indications are the treatment of severe aplastic anaemia or prophylaxis of graft-versus-host disease after an allogeneic bone marrow transplant (Siddiqui et al., 2019). ATG is also used in induction in solid transplants, with the aim of delaying the use of calcineurin inhibitors (Ruan et al., 2017). This indication was approved for renal transplant by the US FDA in 1998, but ATG is commonly used off-label for heart transplants (Ruan et al., 2017).

### Cancer in humans

Several follow-up studies of patients with aplastic anaemia who underwent ATG immunosuppression report an increased incidence of mainly haematological malignancies; however, they do not account for potential subsequent treatment with haematopoietic stem cell transplantation (HSCT), which is recommended after the failure of ATG immunosuppression in those patients (Socié et al., 1993, Frickhofen et al., 2003). A study in 93 patients, which censored patients undergoing HSCT, found an SIR for myeloid malignancies of 46.7 (95% CI, 35.2–103.6) and an SIR for non-myeloid malignancies of 2.4 (95% CI, 1.3–3.8), compared with the general Dutch population (van der Hem et al., 2017). In solid organ transplants, within the large Collaborative Transplant Study database (approximately 200 000 transplants), induction therapy with muromonab-CD3 or ATG was found to increase lymphoma in the first year after transplant (Opelz and Döhler, 2004). In the US Scientific Registry of Transplant Recipients ( $n = 41\,000$ ), an increased risk of post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder (PTLD) was found to be associated with equine (HR, 1.50; 95% CI, 0.93–2.43) and rabbit (HR, 3.00; 95% CI, 1.53–5.89) ATG (Bustami et al., 2004). In the United Network of Organ Sharing registry, rabbit ATG was not associated with PTLD, whereas equine ATG was (Dharnidharka and Stevens, 2005). ATG was associated with an increased risk of PTLD in a Medicare analysis of solid transplants patients (HR, 1.55; 95% CI, 1.2–1.99) (Caillard et al., 2005). Polyclonal anti-T-cell induction (which includes ATG) has been linked to an increased risk of melanoma but not NHL in the US Transplant Cancer Match Study (Hall et al., 2015). Other studies in patients receiving solid organ transplants have focused on overall malignancies, with more conflicting results (Ruan et al., 2017). Challenges in interpreting the available data include differences across studies in the definition of the outcome (PTLD is a spectrum of different pathologies, including malignant diseases such as lymphomas) and the exposure, with some studies estimating the effect by type of ATG.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

The polyclonal nature of ATG is reflected in its diverse effects on the immune system, including T-cell depletion in blood and peripheral lymphoid tissues through complement-dependent lysis and T-cell activation and apoptosis, modulation of key cell surface molecules that mediate leukocyte–endothelium interactions, induction of apoptosis in B-cell lineages, interference with dendritic cell functional properties, and induction of regulatory T and NKT cells (Mohty, 2007).

ATG has been shown to induce a temporary increase in levels of IL-7 and IL-15 during lymphopenia in 80 children (Kielsen et al., 2021), to increase procalcitonin (PCT) and C-reactive protein concentration in

blood in 26 adult patients, and also to increase serum levels of 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3 in 197 patients. ATG has increased 1,25-dihydroxyvitamin D3 in human monocyte-derived dendritic cells (Matos et al., 2022). ATG facilitated erythroid differentiation in leukaemic cells from two patients and K562 cells (Panella and Huang, 1990), and triggered the release of pro-angiogenic factors, such as VEGF, C-X-C, and CC chemokines (Lichtenauer et al., 2012).

ATG decreased the numbers of dendritic cells in five patients (Fang et al., 2005) and induced dose-dependent lymphocytopaenia in the blood and dose-dependent T-cell depletion in the spleen and lymph nodes in cynomolgus monkeys (Préville et al., 2001). ATG strongly induced apoptosis in vitro against naive, human activated B-cells and bone marrow resident plasma cells at clinically relevant concentrations (1–100 ng/mL) (Zand et al., 2005). Furthermore, ATG expanded CD4<sup>+</sup>CD25<sup>+</sup>Foxp3<sup>+</sup> regulatory T cells (Lopez et al., 2006), and induced a dose-dependent down-modulation of cell surface expression of  $\beta$ 2-integrin on rabbit lymphocytes, monocytes, and neutrophils (Michallet et al., 2003).

### Summary

Regarding studies of cancer in humans, some studies reported a high magnitude of risk for different types of haematological cancer; however, the inconsistencies across studies on the type of outcome and exposure assessed would need to be examined in detail in any future *IARC Monographs* evaluation. No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available. There is some evidence that ATG exhibits KCs, in particular, immunosuppression, in exposed humans, human primary cells, and experimental systems; however, there are concerns related to the quality of the studies. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of ATG to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 087 Methotrexate (CAS No. 59-05-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Methotrexate has been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### Exposure characterization

Methotrexate is an antimetabolite most commonly used in cancer chemotherapy and an immunosuppressant widely used to treat inflammatory conditions, including rheumatoid arthritis, psoriasis (including psoriatic arthritis), and Crohn disease. It has been used since the 1950s and has become a low-cost standard of care in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis in adults. It is used around the world and is included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b), but no reliable data on levels of use were identified by the Advisory Group. Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of methotrexate. Methotrexate is also included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list (NIOSH, 2016b).

### Cancer in humans

A Danish case-control study based on medical records found an increased risk of BCC (the most common malignant neoplasm in humans) ( $n = 131\,477$ ; OR, 1.29; 95% CI, 1.20–1.38), cutaneous SCC ( $n = 18\,661$ ; OR, 1.61; 95% CI, 1.37–1.89), and melanoma ( $n = 26\,068$ ; OR, 1.35; 95% CI, 1.13–1.61) for the use of methotrexate ( $\geq 2.5\text{ g}$ )  $\geq 1$  years before diagnosis with some evidence of a dose-response relation for BCC and cutaneous SCC (Polesie et al., 2023).

A randomized trial of low-dose methotrexate (15–20 mg weekly) for the prevention of atherosclerosis in 4786 patients with previous cardiometabolic diseases was stopped after 2.3 years, owing to a lack of efficacy and a variety of adverse events, including an increased risk of non-basal-cell skin cancers (33 versus



12 events; RR, 3.08;  $P = 0.002$ ) (Ridker et al., 2019). However, psoriasis could also be a risk factor for NMSC, which makes confounding by indication difficult to rule out (Trafford et al., 2019).

In a retrospective matched cohort study of patients prescribed methotrexate ( $n = 101\,966$ ) in Sweden and patients prescribed other drugs ( $n = 509\,279$ ), there was a higher cumulative 5-year risk of melanoma (0.48% versus 0.41%;  $P < 0.001$ ) (Polesie et al., 2017). It was noted that this seemed to be restricted to women older than 70 years at the start of treatment. A nested case–control study of melanoma in a cohort of patients with psoriasis in Sweden did not find an association with methotrexate prescriptions (395 cases and 3950 controls; OR, 1.0; 95% CI, 0.8–1.3) (Polesie et al., 2020).

A pooled analysis of meningioma among survivors of childhood cancer who received methotrexate found an increased risk (OR, 3.43; 95% CI, 1.56–7.57) but no dose–response relation (Withrow et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous IARC evaluation, the available experimental data on cancers in animals, consisting of oral studies on mice and hamsters and studies of intraperitoneal or intravenous administration in mice and rats, was evaluated as *inadequate*. No new animal cancer bioassays were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Several available mechanistic studies suggest that methotrexate may possess several KCs. Its therapeutic effect in the treatment of rheumatoid arthritis and other autoimmune diseases is based on its immunosuppressive properties, mediated by its ability to prevent dihydrofolate reductase (DHFR), which is involved in nucleotide biosynthesis (Zhao et al., 2022). There are also several studies available on methotrexate's ability to cause oxidative stress and genotoxicity in experimental systems, both in vitro and in vivo (e.g. Dadhania et al., 2010; Sekeroğlu and Sekeroğlu, 2012; Hess and Khasawneh, 2015; Said Salem et al., 2017; Rjiba-Touati et al., 2018; Rababa'h et al., 2020; Ezhilarasan 2021; Aghajanshakeri et al., 2023). Although some positive results on genotoxicity have been observed in humans treated with methotrexate, negative studies also exist (Jensen et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

There is consistent evidence of an increased risk of skin cancer, particularly non-melanoma subtypes, associated with the use of methotrexate, from a few well-conducted record-linkage studies in Nordic countries; however, the role of confounding by indication remains a concern. Mechanistic evidence shows that methotrexate exhibits KCs, i.e. genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and immunosuppression. Based on the new human cancer data and mechanistic evidence, the Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of methotrexate to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **088 Glucocorticoids**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Glucocorticoids have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Glucocorticoids were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer and mechanistic evidence.

## Exposure characterization

Glucocorticoids are synthetic analogues of the natural steroid hormones produced by the adrenal cortex and are widely used in the treatment of various inflammatory and autoimmune disorders and other conditions, including renal insufficiency, acute and chronic inflammatory conditions, and some leukaemias.

## Cancer in humans

The report of the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a) indicated positive evidence and associations between some glucocorticoids and several types of cancer, including SCC and BCC, bladder cancer, and NHL. Notably, however, Purdue (2003) has proposed a reanalysis of the data of Karagas et al. (2001), showing possible confounding or effect modification by atopic conditions hypothesized to be protective for SCC. Purdue suggested that the lack of association with inhaled corticoids reported in Karagas et al. (2001) could be explained by a similar confounding effect of asthma. However, the potential for this bias, which would bias estimates towards the null, was not further explored.

In an analysis of data from a clinical trial in 1051 participants, Baibergenova et al. (2012) reported an elevated risk of BCC among those who used prednisone for more than 30 days (HR, 1.26; 95% CI, 0.9–1.78), but not for SCC (HR, 1.03; 95% CI: 0.66–1.60). An increased risk of cancers of the liver and lung was found to be associated with glucocorticoid use in an analysis of the sample cohort database of the National Health Insurance Service of the Republic of Korea (Oh and Song, 2020).

There is also some evidence regarding other cancer types. An increased risk of specific subtypes of breast cancer (in situ, and stages 3 and 4) with the use of systemic glucocorticoids was reported for the *Étude Épidémiologique auprès de femmes de la Mutuelle Générale de l'Éducation Nationale* (E3N) cohort (Cairat et al., 2021). The same study reported an inverse association for other breast cancer subtypes (ER-negative). No increased risk of CRC with the use of systemic glucocorticoids was reported in one nested case–control study in Denmark (Ostenfeld et al., 2013). Associations between specific glucocorticoid medications and NHL were found in a systematic screening of medication prescription and cancer risk in a primary care database in Scotland (McDowell et al., 2021).

## Cancer in experimental animals

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), studies have found equivocal evidence of tumorigenicity of different glucocorticoids.

## Mechanistic evidence

The report of the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a) notes:

Mechanistic studies have demonstrated anti-apoptotic effects of glucocorticoids including increasing anti-apoptotic proteins Bcl-2 and Bcl-xL, and by inhibiting IFN-gamma-anti-Fas-induced apoptosis (Wen et al., 1997; Bailly-Maitre et al., 2002; Sorrentino et al., 2017). A study in human bladder tumour tissues (Ishiguro et al., 2014) supported the experimental evidence (Zheng et al., 2012) suggesting an inhibitory role of glucocorticoid receptor signals in bladder cancer outgrowth: glucocorticoid receptor expression was downregulated in bladder tumours.

Other studies relating to DNA damage, oxidative stress, receptor-mediated effects, and tumour progression have been published for individual glucocorticoids.

## Summary

Across the identified epidemiological studies of human cancer, there appears to be little consistency regarding the cancer sites for which an association is reported. The Advisory Group further considered that a single evaluation of the entire class of glucocorticoids is unwarranted at present. There might be evidence for some of the glucocorticoids, mainly for immunosuppression; however, the evidence remains rather sparse at this time, particularly for individual glucocorticoids, and there is not enough evidence to make a judgement for this entire class of drugs.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 089 Androstenedione (CAS No. 63-05-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Androstenedione is an androgenic anabolic steroid. Androgenic anabolic steroids were classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in animals and *limited* evidence for cancer in humans. Androstenedione was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Androstenedione is endogenously synthesized by the human adrenal cortex and gonads. Androstenedione is weakly androgenic and can be converted to estrogens and more potent androgens in peripheral tissues. Androstenedione, along with dehydroepiandrosterone, may be the dominant circulating androgen in prepubertal girls (during adrenarche) and postmenopausal women. For more information on the classification of androstenedione as an androgenic anabolic steroid, see Yesalis and Bahrke (2002), US FDA (2022), and DrugBank Online (2024b). 5-Androstenedione is the exogenous drug, whereas 4-androstenedione is endogenous.

### Cancer in humans

Little new evidence has accrued on cancer in humans associated with exogenous androstenedione. There is evidence for an association between endogenous androstenedione of some cancer types, particularly ovary cancer (e.g. Chen et al., 2011; Schock et al., 2014; Iqbal et al., 2019); however, it is likely to be subtype-specific, and the evidence is currently mixed. Most studies concerning breast cancer were null (e.g. Sturgeon et al., 2004; Baglietto et al., 2010; Fourkala et al., 2016).

### Cancer in experimental animals

The studies supporting the classification of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals are described in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 (IARC, 1987a). This evidence would be unlikely to result in a new evaluation.

### Mechanistic evidence

As noted in the report of the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a):

Limited information was identified on the relationship between the key characteristics of carcinogens and androstenedione. As a steroid hormone, androstenedione has both weakly androgenic and estrogenic effects on the respective steroid nuclear receptors. ToxCast data indicate that androstenedione is active in several high-throughput

assays, mostly nuclear receptor and cell cycle assays, at concentrations considerably below those that were cytotoxic. Furthermore, ToxCast endocrine models indicate active agonist calls for the integrated estrogen receptor and androgen receptor bioactivity models (US EPA, 2019). The genetic toxicity of androstenedione was tested in several strains of *Salmonella* and *E. coli*, and in rat bone marrow and mouse peripheral blood (NTP, 2010).

### Summary

Androstenedione administered exogenously is currently classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A). There does not currently appear to be evidence available that would lead to a change in classification. Most of the newly available epidemiological evidence is on the endogenous form of androstenedione, and the *IARC Monographs* programme does not evaluate purely endogenous hazards. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of androstenedione is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 090 Oxymetholone (CAS No. 434-07-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Oxymetholone was evaluated together with other anabolic steroids, which were analysed as a class by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancers of the liver, bile duct, and prostate in humans. Oxymetholone was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), which had overlooked the previous evaluation of anabolic steroids.

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the report of the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), oxymetholone is a 17 $\alpha$ -alkylated anabolic–androgenic steroid synthesized from testosterone (Pavlatos et al., 2001; NTP, 2021e). Oxymetholone is used for the treatment of several conditions, including hypogonadism, delayed puberty, and hereditary angioneurotic oedema, and to stimulate the production of erythrocytes (NTP, 2021e). Oxymetholone is also used to stimulate weight gain (Hengge et al., 1996). In addition, athletes may use it in an attempt to improve performance (Socas et al., 2005).

### Cancer in humans

Very few new human cancer studies were identified for oxymetholone since the previous evaluation.

### Cancer in experimental animals

The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities noted:

The United States National Toxicology Program bioassay (NTP, 1999a) showed increased incidence of subcutaneous tissue fibroma and fibroma or fibrosarcoma (combined) of the skin, variably increased incidence of benign and benign or malignant pheochromocytoma (combined) of the adrenal gland, and increased incidence of renal tubule adenoma in male F344/N rats. In female F344/N rats, there was increased incidence of hepatocellular

neoplasms. Increased incidence of bronchioloalveolar neoplasms and skin neoplasms in female rats was also seen with administration of oxymetholone (NTP, 1999a). Oxymetholone was not positive in transgenic mouse models (Blanchard et al., 1999; Holden et al., 1999; Stoll et al., 1999). Administration of oxymetholone by stomach tube increased the combined incidence of benign and malignant liver tumours (hepatocellular adenoma and carcinoma) in female rats. Benign lung tumours and benign and malignant skin tumours in female rats also were considered to be related to exposure to oxymetholone (NTP, 1999a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Numerous studies are available for the KCs, particularly on receptor-mediated effects. However, it is unclear that these would result in a change of the current classification.

### **Summary**

Given the current evaluation of oxymetholone, as an anabolic steroid, by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A), there does not appear to be enough new human cancer or mechanistic evidence to suggest that a change in classification would be likely. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of oxymetholone is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **091 Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) analogues**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) analogues, also known as GLP-1 receptor agonists, have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

GLP-1 is an intestinal peptide, synthesized by gut neuroendocrine cells, that stimulates pancreatic  $\beta$  cell proliferation, inhibits glucagon secretion, increases satiety through alterations in the hypothalamic signalling pathways, and delays gastric emptying. The GLP-1 receptor agonists constitute a class of anti-diabetics that act as insulin secretagogues and reduce postprandial glucose levels in patients with type 2 diabetes. Liraglutide, lixisenatide, and exenatide are GLP-1 receptor agonists approved clinically for the treatment of diabetes.

GLP-1 analogues are drugs that are widely used to treat type 2 diabetes, and some have been recently approved to treat obesity. The US FDA approved liraglutide, a GLP-1 receptor agonist in 2010. Semaglutides belong to this class of medications, and three are currently approved by the FDA.

Workers may be exposed during the manufacture and handling of GLP-1 analogues. Liraglutide is included in the US NIOSH hazardous drug list, with a note regarding the box warning for risk of thyroid C-cell tumour (NIOSH, 2016b). However, NIOSH has proposed removing liraglutide from the hazardous drug list in workers, but this has not yet been finalized (US Federal Register, 2024).

### **Cancer in humans**

Based on the animal data, the primary concerns for this class of drugs are cancers of the medullary thyroid and pancreas (Parks and Rosebraugh, 2010). The current human data come mostly from studies of people with type 2 diabetes. In a nested case–control study in France that used a health insurance database

of individuals with diabetes, there were 2562 cases of thyroid cancer and 45 184 control subjects. Use of GLP-1 receptor agonist for 1–3 years was associated with an increased risk of thyroid cancer (HR, 1.58; 95% CI, 1.27–1.95), particularly medullary thyroid cancer (HR, 1.78; 95% CI, 1.04–3.05) (Bezin et al., 2023). In a meta-analysis of 64 randomized trials of these drugs to treat people with type 2 diabetes ( $n = 48$ ) or obesity ( $n = 16$ ), the RR for thyroid cancer was calculated as 1.52 (95% CI, 1.01–2.29) (Silverii et al., 2024).

In an analysis using the US FDA adverse event reporting system, a total of 3703 cases of pancreatic cancer were reported in users of GLP-1 receptor agonists (Cao et al., 2023). In a record-linkage study in Israel of people with diabetes covered by a single health insurer, the HR for pancreatic cancer was 0.50 (0.15–1.71) for GLP-1 receptor agonist, compared with basal insulin (Dankner et al., 2024).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Byrd et al. (2015) studied the tumorigenic potential of dulaglutide in rats and transgenic mice, concluding that GLP-1 had no carcinogenic effect. In rats, dulaglutide injected subcutaneously induced a significant increase of thyroid C-cell adenoma in male and female rodents. The incidence of thyroid C-cell carcinoma also increased but did not reach statistical significance. In transgenic male and female mice (aged 8–9 weeks) dosed subcutaneously twice weekly with dulaglutide at 0, 0.3, 1, or 3 mg/kg for 26 weeks, the effects of dulaglutide were limited to the thyroid C-cells. No dulaglutide-related C-cell neoplasia was observed at any dose (Byrd et al., 2015).

Animal experiments were designed to study C-cell hyperplasia and tumour formation after long-term dosing with GLP-1 receptor agonists in rodents (Chiu et al., 2012). In rats, the incidence of C-cell tumour formation at 104 weeks increased in a dose-dependent manner and reached statistical significance (Chiu et al., 2012).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The prime pharmacological property of agonists of the GLP-1 and gastric inhibitory polypeptide receptors is glucose homeostasis through the stimulation of insulin secretion (the incretin effect) (Baggio and Drucker, 2007). Several studies employing rat thyroid C-cell lines and thyroid tissues have demonstrated that activation of the GLP-1 receptor leads to calcitonin secretion. Calcitonin, a hormone secreted by thyroid C-cells, is regarded as an important clinical biomarker for C-cell diseases, such as medullary thyroid carcinoma and hereditary C-cell hyperplasia, because of its high sensitivity and specificity (Chiu et al., 2012).

Results of the micronucleus test in bone marrow, performed as part of a 13-week repeat-dose toxicity study in rats, showed a small but statistically significant increase in the frequency of micronucleated polychromatic erythrocytes at intermediate (1 mg/kg per day) and high (3 mg/kg per day) dose levels. The results of the Ames test, the micronucleus test in mouse L5178Y tk<sup>+/−</sup> lymphoma cells, and the chromosome aberration test in human lymphocytes showed no indication of genotoxicity (Guérard et al., 2014). In a carcinogenicity study of dulaglutide, diffuse C-cell hyperplasia and adenoma were observed in rats, but not in transgenic mice (Byrd et al., 2015). After 13 weeks of continuous exposure to GLP-1 receptor agonist, liraglutide administration was associated with marked increases in plasma calcitonin concentration and the incidence of C-cell hyperplasia in wildtype mice (Madsen et al., 2012). Liraglutide or exenatide administration in mice for 9–12 weeks was accompanied by C-cell hyperplasia, which was reversed after a 15-week recovery period. In contrast to results in rodents, liraglutide had no effect on plasma calcitonin concentrations, and no C-cell hyperplasia was observed in cynomolgus monkeys after single doses or during 87 weeks of dosing (Bjerre Knudsen et al., 2010).

Liu et al. (2022e) investigated molecular mechanisms of liraglutide in breast cancer cell lines and tissues derived from mice bearing 4T1 cells. Liraglutide accelerated breast cancer progression in vitro and in vivo, through the NOX4/ROS/VEGF pathway.

### Summary

There is emerging evidence for an increased risk of thyroid cancer associated with GLP-1 analogues, which is mainly based on studies with a short-term follow-up. GLP-1 analogues induced tumours in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence that GLP-1 analogues exhibit KCs in experimental systems. Overall, the available information supports an evaluation of carcinogenicity of the agent. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of glucagon-like peptide-1 (GLP-1) analogues to be warranted but, given the rapidly evolving evidence for the agent, an evaluation in the latter half of the period is recommended.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 092 Progestogen-only contraceptives

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Progestogen-only contraceptives, as a group, were classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 72 in 1998 (IARC, 1999c), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals, while there was *inadequate* evidence in humans. Medroxyprogesterone acetate, individually, was evaluated as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), based on *sufficient* evidence in animals and *inadequate* evidence in humans, in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 (IARC, 1987a). Combined estrogen-progestogen oral contraceptives were classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A, in 2008 (IARC, 2012d).

### Exposure characterization

Progestogen-only contraceptives are a group of natural and synthetic progestogens used for contraception without estrogens. Different progestogen-only contraceptives are available as oral formulations (e.g. norethindrone, norgestrel, levonorgestrel, desogestrel), injectables (e.g. medroxyprogesterone acetate), subcutaneous implants (e.g. etonogestrel), or progestogen-releasing intrauterine devices (IUDs) (e.g. levonorgestrel). Injectable medroxyprogesterone acetate, injectable norethisterone enanthate, and progesterone-releasing vaginal rings are included in the WHO Model List of Essential Medicines (WHO, 2023b). Injectable progestogen-only contraceptives are the most commonly used injectable contraception types. Globally, 6% of women use injectables, but the percentage is highest in sub-Saharan Africa (43%), with injectables accounting for 50–76% of contraceptive use in LMICs (Jacobstein and Polis, 2014).

Variations exist by countries. In the UK, in 2019–2020, progestogen-only pills constituted 57% of all oral contraceptive prescriptions (Bury et al., 2023). In Denmark, from 1998 to 2010, the use of progestogen-only contraceptives increased from 2.5% to 4.5% (Wilson et al., 2012). In Sweden, progestogen-only pills were prescribed more frequently in women with obesity (44%) than in women of normal weight (25%) (Sundell et al., 2019). Starting in 2024, a progestogen-only contraceptive pill (0.075 mg oral norgestrel) will be the first non-prescription contraceptive available in the USA (Fleurant et al., 2023; US FDA, 2023c); it has been available without prescription in the UK since 2021 (Medicines and Health care products Regulatory Agency, 2021).

In addition to contraception, progestogen-only formulations are used for infertility treatment, menopause, menstrual disorder, the prevention and treatment of miscarriage and preterm labour, and gender transition treatment (female-to-male transition) (Edwards and Can, 2023).

### **Cancer in humans**

Since *IARC Monographs* Volume 72 (IARC, 1999c), new epidemiological data are available, especially concerning the risk of breast cancer associated with progestogen-only contraceptive use. A nested case–control study within the UK Clinical Practice Research Datalink found an increased risk (20–30%) of breast cancer associated with oral, injected, or progestogen-only-releasing IUDs (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). Similarly, a meta-analysis showed an increased risk (20–30%) for all types of progestogen-only contraceptive preparation (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023). The meta-analysis included several informative cohorts from Norway, Sweden, and Denmark (Kumle et al., 2002; Mørch et al., 2017; Busund et al., 2018), as well as case–control studies (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023).

Increasing amounts of evidence, including from the large Ovarian Cancer Association Consortium, indicate that depot-medroxyprogesterone acetate (in the injectable form) or a progesterone-releasing IUD may reduce ovarian cancer risk (Phung et al., 2021). It remains unclear, however, whether progestogen-only contraceptives exhibit the same protective effect on the risk of endometrial cancer (Iversen et al., 2020).

A nested case–control study within the nationwide cancer registry in Denmark reported an OR of 2.4; (95% CI, 1.1–5.1) for the risk of glioma associated with the long-term use of progestogen-only contraceptives, but other studies reported mixed results on glioma risk after hormonal therapy; however, they were unable to distinguish the type of hormonal contraception (Andersen et al., 2015). An analysis using the national Danish birth registry did not find an increased risk of childhood brain cancer (Hargreave et al., 2022) or childhood leukaemia (Hargreave et al., 2018) for maternal exposure to oral progestogen-only contraceptives. The NTP has conducted a scoping review of health effects in offspring for progestogens during pregnancy; however, few results for cancer risk were included (NTP, 2020a).

Progestogen-only contraceptives have traditionally been prescribed to women with a higher BMI, because combined formulations increase the risk of venous thrombosis; thus, obesity may be a potential confounding factor (Andersen et al., 2015). However, confounding by BMI seems a minimal concern because of adjustment for BMI in informative studies and because such confounding would not explain the inverse association for ovarian cancer, which is also obesity-related.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

The IARC reported *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of medroxyprogesterone acetate in *IARC Monographs* Volume 72 in 1998 (IARC, 1999c).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Progestin is a synthetic progesterone, which acts on nuclear, mitochondrial, and membrane progesterone receptors (PRs) (Fedotcheva, 2021). Since “all progestins are not created equal” (Stanczyk, 2003), because of their chemical structure, they will bind to PRs with different affinities, activating different molecular pathways and differing in metabolism, pharmacokinetics, efficacy, and toxicity (Stanczyk et al., 2013). The progestin dose and route of administration will also contribute to different effects on the female genital tract (Dinh et al., 2015) and other PR-expressing tissues, such as the breast (Druckmann, 2003) or brain (Pletzer et al., 2023). Many progestins bind not only to PRs, but also to glucocorticoid, androgen, and mineralocorticoid receptors, and possibly ERs (Africander et al., 2011). Receptor-mediated effects of medroxyprogesterone acetate (MPA) and levonorgestrel in humans are described in *IARC Monographs* Volume 72 (IARC, 1999c). New studies are currently available, especially in exposed humans and human primary cells or tissue, describing several KCs. The genotoxicity of MPA was described as causing



chromosomal aberrations in cultured human PBLs (Siddique et al., 2006) and in human lymphocytes of patients treated for precocious puberty (Lovell and Coco, 1984). Endometrial oxidative stress increased in seven women receiving long-term progestin-only contraceptives (LPCs) (Hickey et al., 2006); this finding was confirmed in experimental settings where human endometrial stromal cells were treated with LPCs (Guzeloglu-Kayisli et al., 2014). Different studies confirm that LPCs enhance abnormal angiogenesis in human endometrial stromal cells (Krikun et al., 2004; Lockwood et al., 2004) and in the human endometrium (Levy et al., 1997). LPC also causes inflammatory changes in cervicovaginal cytokine concentrations in women (Roxby et al., 2016; Bradley et al., 2022) or in human primary endocervical epithelial cells (Govender et al., 2014). MPA, unlike progesterone, was described as repressing inflammatory genes in human PBMCs in a dose-dependent manner, through the glucocorticoid receptor, at concentrations within the physiologically relevant range (Hapgood et al., 2014).

Eigeliene et al. (2006) showed that MPA increases the proliferative activity and thickness of acinar and ductal epithelium and decreases apoptosis in epithelial cells in cultured human breast explants treated for 7 or 14 days. Eigeliene et al. (2006) also found that the expression of  $\alpha$  and  $\beta$  ERs were downregulated in human breast explants treated with MPA for 21 days. The proliferative effects of progestins in breast tissue or breast cells have been confirmed in several studies (Anderson et al., 1989; Mol et al., 1996; Pasqualini et al., 2001; Otto et al., 2007). The action of progestins on the proliferation of mammary epithelium could be explained by a local biosynthesis of growth hormones caused by the stimulatory effect of progestins (Mol et al., 1996) or the activation or downregulation of steroid receptors (an off-target effect) (Jordan et al., 1993; Söderqvist, 1998; Giersig, 2008).

### Summary

Several highly informative epidemiological studies consistently indicate that an increased risk of breast cancer and a decreased risk of ovarian cancer are associated with the use of progestogen-only contraceptives. Epidemiological studies on ovarian cancer are in progress. Emerging evidence shows an association for an increased risk of brain tumour with the use of progestogen-only contraceptives. Mechanistic evidence is available for several of the KCs, suggesting genotoxicity, the modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation in exposed humans and human primary cells or tissues. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of progestogen-only contraceptives to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 093 Menopausal hormone replacement therapy

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Menopausal hormone replacement therapy (HRT) was classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A in 2008 (IARC, 2012d). Two separate evaluations were reported in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A: (i) for estrogen-only menopausal HRT (*sufficient* evidence in humans for cancers of the endometrium and ovary, *limited* evidence for breast cancer, and *evidence suggesting lack of carcinogenicity* for CRC); and (ii) for combined estrogen-progestogen menopausal HRT (*sufficient* evidence in humans for cancers of the breast and endometrium) and estrogen-progestogen oral contraceptives (*sufficient* evidence in humans for cancers of the breast, cervix, and liver).

There was also *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for some estrogens or estrogen-progestin combinations used in HRT. Mechanistic evidence highlighted a receptor-mediated effect and a genotoxic mechanism for estrogen-only menopausal HRT and for combined estrogen-progestogen menopausal HRT.

The Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a) recommended re-evaluation with a priority rating of *high*, based on *sufficient* or *limited* epidemiological evidence on estrogen-only menopausal HRT and new cancer sites.

### Exposure characterization

Menopausal HRT, commonly simply referred to as HRT, refers to the replacement of hormones lost during the menopausal transition. It is available in different formulations: peroral (pill), transdermal (patch, gel, aerosol), or vaginal (tablet, cream, ring) (Harper-Harrison and Shanahan, 2024). Menopausal HRT exists as estrogen-only menopausal HRT (for women who have had a hysterectomy) and as combined estrogen-progesterone HRT (for women with intact uteri), but the type of estrogen or progestogen mainly used varies by country; for example, conjugate equine estrogen is the major estrogen used in the USA, while in Europe estradiol derivatives are more commonly used (Harper-Harrison and Shanahan, 2024).

Approximately 75% of perimenopausal women are affected by vasomotor and genitourinary menopausal symptoms, for which menopausal HRT has proven to be the most effective treatment (Eubanks, 2023). HRT is also prescribed to reduce the risk of osteoporosis in menopause or after oophorectomy. HRT is mostly used in high-income countries; its use in western Europe and North America peaked in 2000 (at the time of the publication of trial results showing an increased risk of cardiovascular disease), with around 35 million users, and then stabilized at around 12 million users/year (Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer, 2019; Sundell et al., 2023). An increase in use has been documented after 2017 in some countries, after changes in clinical guidelines informed by new results from the Women's Health Initiative (WHI) trial (Sundell et al., 2023). It is estimated that between 12% and 50% of women worldwide use HRT; however, its use is underestimated in countries where HRT is available over the counter without medical supervision, such as in Latin America (Baena et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

The previous IARC evaluation established that there was *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity for breast cancer in humans for combined progesterone-estrogen HRT formulations and *limited* evidence of carcinogenicity for breast cancer in humans for estrogen-only HRT formulations. Major studies published after *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A (IARC, 2012d) are summarized next.

A case-control study nested in a pooled cohort of 58 prospective cohort studies with information on HRT and breast cancer follow-up ( $n = 108\,647$ ) showed an increased risk of breast cancer for estrogen-only and progesterone-estrogen HRT formulations (Collaborative Group on Hormonal Factors in Breast Cancer, 2019). The risk was increased for any type of estrogen or progestogen constituent and any mode of administration (oral, transdermal, vaginal estrogen). The use of vaginal estrogen is generally considered safe and recommended as an option for survivors of breast cancer (Zhang et al., 2021b; Baena et al., 2023); however, there was a borderline statistical association in the 58-study pooled analysis (RR, 1.09; 95% CI, 0.97–1.23), and studies showing increased breast cancer recurrence with vaginal estrogen have been the subject of debate (Cold et al., 2022; Pederson et al., 2023). Other studies conducted in racially and ethnically diverse populations have also reported a consistent positive association of HRT, including estrogen-only formulations, with breast cancer in the USA (Phung et al., 2022b), although the latest follow-up for the WHI trial reported a decreased risk for conjugated equine estrogen alone in women with hysterectomy, compared with a placebo (Chlebowski et al., 2020).

Numerous studies have evaluated HRT and the risk of non-melanoma or melanoma skin cancer; a recent meta-analysis reported an increased risk of melanoma for both estrogen-only (HR, 1.22; 95% CI, 1.16–1.29) and estrogen-progestogen combinations (HR, 1.11; 95% CI, 1.05–1.18) and an increase of NMSC for estrogen-only HRT (HR, 1.21; 95% CI, 1.10–1.33) (Lallas et al., 2023). These observations are consistent with a possible cumulative phototoxic effect of estrogen (Cahoon et al., 2015).

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A, there was *sufficient* evidence for ovarian cancer for estrogen-only HRT (IARC, 2012d). Studies published after Volume 100A have also shown an increased risk of ovarian cancer for estrogen-progestogen combinations, including in racially and ethnic diverse population (Petrick et al., 2023); however, with some inconsistencies across studies (Bakken et al., 2004, Yuk and Kim, 2023). In a large prospective ovarian cancer cohort consortium, a positive association was observed for combined estrogen-progesterone HRT (Wentzensen et al., 2016). In the French E3N cohort, risk was elevated only for some types of estrogen-progestogen combination (HR for having ever used estrogen with progesterone or dydrogesterone, 1.25; 95% CI, 1.04–1.57), but not for others (Fournier et al. 2023); therefore, it is possible that the inconsistency in the results is due to different types of progestogen.

In a pooled cohort analysis of about 1 million women, an increased risk of thyroid cancer was associated with having ever used HRT (HR, 1.16; 95% CI, 1.02–1.33), but no analysis was presented by type of HRT (O’Grady et al., 2024). An increased risk was also reported for meningioma and HRT in a meta-analysis (RR for having ever used HRT, 1.14; 95% CI, 0.98–1.33) (Zhang et al., 2021b), which also included the positive findings (ever used HRT versus never used: HR, 1.62; 95% CI, 1.04–2.54) in the European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition (EPIC) cohort (Michaud et al., 2010).

In addition to colon cancer, a consistent reduced risk associated with HRT was reported for lung (Wen et al., 2022), gastric, and oesophageal cancers (Song et al., 2023b, Zhang et al., 2021b), and for pancreatic cancer (Jang et al., 2023).

### Summary

Recent studies consistently show an increased risk of skin cancer for both combined estrogen-progestogen and estrogen-only HRT formulations. For breast cancer, consistent with *IARC Monographs* Volume 100A, studies show positive associations between combined progesterone-estrogen HRT formulations and breast cancer. New evidence is expected within the next 2–5 years. For estrogen-only formulations, large observational studies have also reported an increased risk of breast cancer, but the inconsistency with other reports needs to be closely evaluated. Informative studies also show an increased risk of ovary cancer for combined estrogen-progestogen HRT formulations and, although without stratification by HRT formulation, of thyroid cancer and meningioma. Very consistent evidence shows a protective effect of HRT for various digestive organ sites and lung cancer. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation stratified by administration route of menopausal HRT to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 094 Clomiphene citrate (CAS No. 50-41-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Clomiphene citrate was evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). Fertility treatment was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of epidemiological evidence for gynaecological cancers and mechanistic evidence for the modulation of receptor-mediated effects and alteration of cell proliferation. It was noted that, for epidemiological evidence, few studies were able to separate the effect of each specific drug.

### Exposure characterization

Clomiphene citrate is a selective ER modifier and has been used to stimulate ovulation for fertility treatment since 1960 (Carson and Kallen, 2021). The use of ovary-stimulating drugs has increased in recent

years, especially in high-income countries. Clomiphene citrate has been used preferentially in women with polycystic ovary syndrome (Silva et al., 2009).

### **Cancer in humans**

Clomiphene citrate was evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), based on *inadequate* evidence regarding cancer in humans and in experimental animals. The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities highlighted general challenges in interpreting the epidemiological studies on fertility treatment, including the relative rarity of exposure, limited follow-up time, a lack of data on the number of cycles or doses, and potential confounding by subfertility or infertility for cancers of the ovary, endometrium, or breast (IARC, 2019a). The 2019 Advisory Group report also emphasized that no clear evidence of increased risk of endometrium and breast cancer for fertility treatment has emerged from Cochrane reviews or several meta-analyses, and that a possible excess risk of borderline ovarian tumours could be due to the intrinsic characteristics of these tumours or to surveillance bias.

The most recent meta-analysis of epidemiological studies of infertility treatments and cancer risk found an OR for ovarian cancer overall of 1.19 (95% CI, 0.98–1.46), with a stronger association for borderline ovarian tumours (OR, 1.69; 95% CI, 1.27–2.25) (Barcroft et al., 2021). In further subgroup analyses, the incidence of ovarian cancer was shown to be significantly higher in a group treated with clomiphene citrate (OR, 1.40; 95% CI, 1.10–1.77) (Barcroft et al., 2021). Updates of the Ovariumstimulatie en Gynecologische Aandoeningen (OMEGA) cohort in the Netherlands and a cohort in Israel, which have more detailed data on treatments and potential confounders, have not yet been published.

Several cohort studies in Norway, the UK, and the USA have also found exposure to clomiphene citrate to be associated with an increased risk of endometrial cancer (Silva et al., 2009; Brinton et al., 2013; Reigstad et al., 2017), but some uncertainty remains on confounding by indication in women with polycystic ovary syndrome. There is also emerging evidence for an increased risk of other cancer sites, particularly melanoma and thyroid cancer; however, findings are somewhat inconsistent (Brinton et al., 2015).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of clomiphene citrate. Clomiphene citrate was tested in an experiment in newborn rats, to which it was administered by single subcutaneous injection; reproductive tract abnormalities, including uterine and ovarian tumours, were reported (IARC, 1979a). No new data regarding cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Clomiphene citrate has a very similar structure and binding affinity to that of tamoxifen (classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans*, Group 1), suggesting its role as a possible estrogenic substance in the endometrium (Fang et al., 2001).

No data were available on the genetic and related effects of clomiphene citrate in humans. Clomiphene citrate did not induce chromosomal aberrations or micronuclei in the bone marrow cells of mice treated in vivo. In experimental systems, a micronucleus assay suggested a dose-dependent effect of clomiphene citrate on genomic instability in bone marrow stem cells in vivo (Duran et al., 2006). A review by Yilmaz et al. (2018) showed clomiphene citrate to be genotoxic, cytotoxic, embryotoxic, and teratogenic. In polycystic ovary syndrome, clomiphene citrate may be associated with lower antioxidant levels in women with drug resistance and also has associations with prolactin-producing tumours that generate mild inflammation characteristics (Kettel et al., 1993; Ide et al., 2020; Akre et al., 2022).

## Summary

Positive associations between clomiphene citrate and cancers of the ovary or endometrium have been reported in several cohort studies, with uncertainty remaining as to the role of confounding by indication. A positive study of cancer in experimental animals that was reviewed by the previous Working Group in 1987 has been considered by the Advisory Group. The mechanistic evidence and structural similarity to tamoxifen supports a re-evaluation and potential change in the classification. Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of clomiphene citrate to be warranted. This should take place in the latter half of the next 5 years to accommodate expected updates of some informative cohort studies.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 095 Assisted reproductive techniques

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Assisted reproductive techniques (ARTs) have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Fertility treatment, a broader term that includes ARTs, was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on evidence of cancer in humans and mechanistic evidence. The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities indicated emerging evidence of childhood cancer in children conceived with the aid of ARTs, noting, however, inconsistency of results, an inability to disentangle findings for specific drugs or techniques, and a lack of control for birth defects or perinatal factors.

### Exposure characterization

An ART is any fertility treatment that involves manipulation of the eggs or embryo; in vitro fertilization (IVF) is the most common among these techniques (Jain and Singh, 2023). Therefore, ARTs involve exposing the mother undergoing fertility treatment to different techniques or drugs, as well as, at an embryonic stage, children born after that treatment. There may also be maternal exposure to ovary-stimulating drugs, such as clomiphene citrate, which is described separately in the present report (agent 094), or to exogenous gonadotropins (Jain and Singh, 2023).

In 2021, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) estimated that nearly 240 000 patients underwent ARTs, resulting in 97 000 liveborn infants (CDC, 2021). Approximately 2.3% of infants born in the USA were conceived using ARTs, compared with 1.5% in 2011 (Sunderam et al., 2014). In China, the number of infants born after the use of ARTs was over 300 000 in 2016, 1.7% of live births (Bai et al., 2020). The use of ARTs is increasing around the world, including in LMICs (Chambers et al., 2021).

### Cancer in humans

The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities noted that several studies have reported an increased risk of cancer (particularly haematological malignancies) in children born after the use of ARTs, but few have examined specific drugs or techniques, and results have not been consistent (IARC, 2019a). Since then, more record-linkage studies have been published but still with inconsistent findings. In a recent large cohort study in Israel, the RR for paediatric cancer after an ART was 0.95 (95% CI, 0.76–1.19). The RR was 1.09 (95% CI, 0.79–1.48) for IVF treatments (Gilboa et al., 2019). In an associated meta-analysis of 13 cohort studies, with a total of 750 138 women exposed to ARTs (with 1152 cases of paediatric cancer) and 214 008 000 unexposed controls (with cases of 30 458 paediatric cancer), there was also no increased risk of paediatric cancer (RR, 0.99; 95% CI, 0.85–1.15) (Gilboa et al., 2019). In a large cohort in Taiwan, China, of 2 308 016 parent–child triads and 1880 children with incident childhood cancer, conception using ARTs was associated with an increased risk of childhood cancer (primarily leukaemia and hepatic tumours), compared with

natural conception (HR, 1.58; 95% CI, 1.17–2.12), and compared with subfertility but non-ART conception (HR, 1.42; 95% CI, 1.04–1.95) (Weng et al., 2022).

A nationwide cohort registry study in four countries in Scandinavia also reported an increased risk of childhood cancer specifically for children born from the transfer of frozen and thawed embryos, compared with other techniques (fresh embryo transfer or spontaneous conception) (Sargisian et al., 2022). A cohort study in the USA of 126 125 children born after the use of ARTs found that the use of ARTs was associated with an increased risk of cancer, primarily owing to an increased risk of birth defects (Luke et al., 2022). An increased risk of childhood neoplasms was also reported in a record-linkage study of ART-born children in the UK (Sutcliffe et al., 2023).

An increased risk of ovarian cancer in women undergoing ARTs has been reported in studies comparing ART-treated women with the general population, raising concerns over potential confounding by nulliparity (Spaan et al., 2021). A recent publication from the OMEGA cohort had, indeed, shown an increased risk of ovarian cancer only when women undergoing ART were compared with the general population and not when they were compared with women who were subfertile but not undergoing ART (Spaan et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Neonatal female Sprague-Dawley rats were injected on day 1 of life with clomiphene (50 µg/rat). After 100 days, the rats exhibited uterine cystic hyperplasia, uterine metaplasia, and endometrial disorganization, as well as tumours of the uterus. Uterine tumours were observed in only a few animals; however, no animals older than 100 days were included in this study (Clark and McCormack, 1977).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

It has been shown that conception using ARTs is associated with aberrant DNA methylation in imprinted loci and other genes in various tissues (Barberet et al., 2022). In addition, ART-conceived neonates displayed widespread differences in DNA methylation, and overall less methylation across the genome (Håberg et al., 2022). Furthermore, children conceived after the use of ARTs into 67 families not diagnosed with oligoasthenoteratozoospermia had a significantly shorter leukocyte telomere length than those conceived spontaneously (Wang et al., 2022d). ARTs also induced global reduction in DNA methylation in mice (de Waal et al., 2015). Yang et al. (2021a) reported that placentas from intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection (ICSI), but not IVF, showed global H3K4me3 alteration compared with those from natural conception. Further, sex-stratified analysis found that, compared with cord blood mononuclear cells (CBMCs) sampled after natural conceptions in same-sex neonates, CBMCs from boys conceived after ICSI presented more genes with differentially enriched H3K4me3 ( $n = 198$ ) than those from girls conceived after ICSI ( $n = 79$ ), girls conceived after IVF ( $n = 5$ ), and boys conceived after IVF ( $n = 2$ ). In addition, 11 out of 84 microRNAs in the granulosa cells obtained from follicular ovarian retrieval from seven patients in a group receiving FSH (225 IU recombinant FSH) and six patients in a group receiving FSH and LH (150 IU recombinant FSH and 75 IU recombinant LH) were differentially expressed between the FSH and LH group and the FSH group. Differentially expressed miRNA profiles are related to estrogen signalling, oocyte meiosis, and pluripotent cell regulation (Vigo et al., 2021).

One study showed that 69 patients undergoing conventional IVF had more CD45<sup>+</sup> leucocytes, fewer CD8<sup>+</sup> T cells, decreased concentrations of IL-8 in follicular fluid, and increased VEGF concentrations in serum, compared with patients undergoing natural cycle IVF (Kollmann et al., 2017). Pregnancies after egg donation ( $n = 25$ ) showed reduced concentrations of stromal cell-derived factor 1α (SDF1α) in the third trimester, compared with pregnancies after natural conception ( $n = 25$ ) and IVF ( $n = 25$ ) (Martínez-Varea et al., 2015).

Clomiphene citrate (agent 094) has been shown to increase serum concentrations of progesterone and blood concentrations of estradiol and progesterone in women who are infertile (Hammond and Talbert, 1982;

Fukuma et al., 1983). Repetitive cycles of hormonal stimulation during IVF procedures induced strong cytoplasmic positivity of ER $\alpha$  and PR in atypical melanocytes of two specimens of melanoma from patients (Dika et al., 2017).

Ovariectomized rats treated with clomiphene (5 mg/kg) for 24 hours showed depletion of cytosol estrogen receptors (Kurl and Morris, 1978). In addition, clomiphene reduced the number of cumulus–oocyte complexes (COCs) and E2 levels in the ovary and serum and induced membrane blebbing in oocytes, Bax protein expression, and DNA fragmentation in ovarian follicular cells and ovulated COCs in immature female rats (Chaube et al., 2005).

Clomiphene citrate induced DNA fragmentation in two breast cancer cell lines: MCF-7 and BT20. (Elloumi-Mseddi et al., 2015).

## Summary

Findings regarding associations between ARTs and childhood cancer remain inconsistent, with few studies available that are able to disentangle the contribution from each different technique or drug or that have good control for confounding (from the presence of birth defects, perinatal risk factors, or infertility). The Advisory Group noted a lack of data for cancer in experimental animals for nearly all ARTs.

There is evidence that ARTs exhibit KCs; in particular, there is evidence for epigenetic alterations and immunosuppression in exposed humans and experimental systems. Clomiphene induces receptor-mediated effects and alterations of cell proliferation and cell death in exposed humans, experimental systems, or both. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of assisted reproductive techniques is warranted but recommended waiting until more defined protocols are available, to help focus the evaluation of specific ART components beyond clomiphene citrate (agent 094).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 096 Neonatal phototherapy

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Neonatal phototherapy has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Neonatal phototherapy was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on evidence from studies of cancer in humans and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Neonatal phototherapy refers to the use of visible light (green-blue light at wavelengths of 420–550 nm) to treat neonatal jaundice, owing to high serum concentrations of unconjugated bilirubin in the neonate (Wang et al., 2021a). It is the standard treatment of choice for hyperbilirubinemia in neonates and is a preventive and treatment strategy for severe neonatal jaundice (Wang et al., 2021a). The median duration of treatment has been reported to be 50 hours (interquartile range, 27–85 hours) (Mukherjee et al., 2018).

### Cancer in humans

The priority recommendation of *high* for neonatal phototherapy by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities was based mainly on positive findings for childhood cancers in cohort studies from Canada (Auger et al., 2019) and the USA (Newman et al., 2016; Wickremasinghe et al., 2016). The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities noted an inconsistency between the cancer sites across studies and the possibility of confounding by indication, which was suggested by attenuation of the risk of leukaemia, non-lymphocytic leukaemia, and liver cancer reported after adjustment for propensity score (which incorporated bilirubin levels, chromosomal disorders, and congenital anomalies, among other covariates) in the Kaiser Permanente

northern California dataset (Newman et al. 2016). An update of this Kaiser Permanente analysis, with an additional 5 years of follow-up, did not confirm the previous finding of an increased risk (Digitale et al., 2021). A recent large cohort study from Israel (Bugaiski-Shaked et al., 2022) reported an increased risk of cancer after phototherapy, but with adjustment to perinatal factors limited to only preterm birth and maternal age. An increased risk for all cancers and benign tumours was also reported in a sensitivity analysis excluding children with malformations. HRs for phototherapy exposure are increased for haematological malignancy and leukaemia; however, only unadjusted models are presented (Bugaiski-Shaked et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Several publications are available for studies in exposed humans on the suspected genotoxic effects of neonatal phototherapy (Aycicek et al., 2008; Karadag et al., 2009; Zúñiga-González et al., 2012; Kahveci et al., 2013; Yahia et al., 2015). The role of oxidative stress as a potential mechanism, resulting in DNA damage in neonates – whose antioxidative defence systems are still immature – has also been evaluated in several studies (El-Farrash et al., 2019). Some studies have evaluated the effect of phototherapy on the immune system, including the levels of immune cells and various cytokines, but with variable findings (Sirota et al., 1999; Kurt et al., 2009; Procianoy et al., 2010; Jahanshahifard et al., 2012).

### **Summary**

The epidemiological evidence of an association between neonatal phototherapy and cancer risk is inconsistent across studies. No studies of cancer in experimental animals are available. Some supportive mechanistic evidence is available for the KCs for neonatal phototherapy. Concerns remain on confounding factors to assess the effects of neonatal phototherapy in human cancer and mechanistic studies. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of neonatal phototherapy is warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## **097 Intense pulsed light**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Intense pulsed light (IPL) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

IPL therapy involves emitting flashes of polychromatic light with a wavelength range of 400–1400 nm and is used in the treatment of several dermatological diseases and for hair removal (ANSES, 2021; Gade et al. 2023). Specific wavelengths can be targeted for treatment with the application of filters, allowing for certain tissues to be targeted. In the USA, IPL therapies were first approved in 1995 by the US FDA. Currently, the US FDA has approved IPL devices for several dermatological diseases or conditions (telangiectasias, photorejuvenation, facial wrinkles, hyperpigmentation, lentigines, ephelides, melasma, rosacea, acne vulgaris, poikiloderma of Civatte, port wine stains, haemangioma, leg veins, venous malformations, and removal of unwanted hair) and to treat dry eye disease resulting from meibomian gland dysfunction (Gade et al., 2023).

Devices are available for both professional and home use (ANSES, 2021). IPL therapy involves four variables of exposure: wavelength, pulse duration, fluence (amount of energy per unit area), and spot size (diameter of illuminated area). Light is absorbed by the skin, leading to photothermolysis. Treatment is contraindicated in some circumstances, such as having a history of skin cancer or having certain other



medical conditions (e.g. autoimmune disease, photosensitive dermatitis) (ANSES, 2021) Exposures are almost entirely limited to end users, though there might be some occupational exposure for health care personnel operating these devices in professional settings.

### **Cancer in humans**

In their review, the French Agency for Food, Environmental, and Occupational Health & Safety (ANSES, 2021) did not identify any cancers related to IPL treatment that were induced by thermal effects. However, ANSES (2021) indicated that the relatively recent development and use of this treatment have not necessarily allowed a sufficient latency period for the detection of cancer in humans. Dessinioti et al. (2023) reviewed studies looking at changes in nevi after IPL treatment; only three small prospective studies of around 30 subjects were included, while the rest of the studies were case reports. Non-malignant changes in nevi were noted, but no melanoma was identified.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Sixteen female DBA/2JRccHsd mice (aged 21 weeks) were used in a mouse model of two-stage skin carcinogenesis to evaluate the effects of IPL on skin carcinogenesis (Faustino-Rocha et al., 2016). Animals were divided into two groups: IPL-exposed and non-IPL-exposed. The skin of the dorsal region of all animals was shaved using a machine clipper every 2 weeks. Both groups received a single topical application of 7,12-dimethylbenz[*a*]anthracene (DMBA) in that region. Four days afterwards, 12-*O*-tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate (TPA) was applied topically to all animals, twice per week for 22 weeks. The IPL-exposed animals received two applications of IPL on the dorsal region, at an intensity of  $2 \text{ J} \cdot \text{cm}^{-2}$ , on the days of TPA application, over 22 weeks. IPL-exposed animals developed fewer preneoplastic and neoplastic epidermal lesions ( $n = 28$ ; 3.5 lesions/animal) than non-IPL-exposed animals ( $n = 46$ ; 5.8 lesions/animal). Six of the eight IPL-exposed animals developed epidermal neoplastic lesions (incidence, 75%), while all eight non-IPL-exposed animals developed epidermal neoplastic lesions (incidence, 100%). Hence, the IPL-exposed animals developed fewer neoplastic lesions ( $n = 20$ ; 3.3 lesions/animal) than non-IPL-exposed animals ( $n = 38$ ; 4.8 lesions/animal). Although the difference was not statistically significant, there were more microinvasive SCCs in IPL-exposed animals ( $P = 0.317$ ). Grade II and III papillomas were the most frequent papillomas observed in both groups. Only four papillomas developed into invasive SCC after 22 weeks of TPA application.

In 2006, Hedelund et al. (2006) investigated whether IPL treatment had a carcinogenic potential in itself or whether it could influence carcinogenesis induced by UV radiation: hairless mice with light skin ( $n = 144$ ) were used and received three IPL treatments, at 2-week intervals. No tumours appeared in untreated control mice or in mice treated only with IPL. Skin tumours developed in mice exposed to UV radiation independently of IPL treatment.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The findings of Faustino-Rocha et al. (2016) suggest that IPL application increases oxidative stress in skin samples, and causes an increase in DNA damage in keratinocytes, although no alterations of p53 expression were detected after the exposure (supporting KC1, KC2, KC3, KC5). All animals developed an inflammatory stromal response characterized by a diffuse, scarce-to-moderate mononuclear inflammatory infiltrate in the superficial dermis; the inflammatory response was strongly related to tumour promotion (supporting KC6). Faustino-Rocha et al. (2016) demonstrated that all animals exhibited epidermal hyperplasia (supporting KC10). Malekzadeh Gonabadi et al. (2023) reported an increase in TP53 gene expression in skin after IPL treatment. Sorg et al. (2007) reported that exposure to IPL induced the formation of lipid peroxides and thymine dimers in human skin in vivo (KC1, KC2, KC3). Chan et al. (2007) studied the effects on p16 and proliferating cell nuclear antigen (PCNA) expression of repeated treatment with a

high-energy laser and IPL source in a study on male ICR mice and found that repeated use of a high-energy laser and IPL source did not cause any toxicity or tumours in mice; the effects of increased p16 and PCNA were unclear. A significant increase in TP53 gene expression, measured using computer image analysis of immunostained tissue samples, was observed in skin biopsies after IPL treatment in patients with Fitzpatrick skin types III to IV (El-Domyati et al., 2013). However, the levels were found to be “statistically insignificantly lower [...] 3 months after treatment than at the end of treatment”, suggesting reversibility.

### Summary

Human cancer studies with adequate size and follow-up are not yet available. There are initiation–promotion and co-carcinogenicity studies in experimental animals indicating a positive effect of IPL. There is sparse available mechanistic evidence related to the KCs, including genomic instability, oxidative stress, inflammation, and cell proliferation, in experimental systems and in exposed humans. However, the evidence is limited or inadequate for supporting an evaluation of carcinogenicity for IPL. Overall, the available evidence does not justify an evaluation. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of IPL is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 098 Extremely low-frequency magnetic fields

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Extremely low-frequency magnetic fields (ELF-MF) were classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), based on *limited* evidence in relation to childhood leukaemia, in *IARC Monographs* Volume 80 in 2001 (IARC, 2002b). No evaluation was recommended for ELF-MF by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), because of a lack of new informative epidemiological findings, no cancer bioassay evidence, and little supporting mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

People are exposed to ELF-MF (1–100, 3–300, or 3–3000 Hz) resulting from the generation, transmission, distribution, and use of electricity, e.g. from electric power lines and infrastructure, household wiring, electric and electronic appliances, electric cars, and industrial devices. Close to certain appliances, the magnetic field values can be of the order of a few hundred microteslas. Underneath power lines, magnetic fields can be about 20  $\mu$ T. Average residential power-frequency magnetic fields in homes are about 0.07  $\mu$ T in Europe and 0.11  $\mu$ T in North America (WHO, 2007). Exposure levels for the general population are typically 0.01–0.2  $\mu$ T for magnetic fields (IARC, 2002b). In France, the background reference level is 0.1  $\mu$ T (Deschamps and Deambrogio, 2023); 0.1% of the population are estimated to be living in an area potentially exposed to a magnetic field of > 0.4  $\mu$ T (Deshayes-Pinçon et al., 2023). TWA occupational exposures of 2–4  $\mu$ T have been reported for welders, logging workers, sewing machine users, linemen, and train drivers. Exposure to ELF-MF while at school may represent a significant fraction of a child’s total exposure (IARC, 2002b). Magnetic field exposures have been reported based on magnetic flux density measurements, distances between a child’s home and power lines, and wire codings (Brabant et al., 2022).

### Cancer in humans

Since the latest IARC evaluation (IARC, 2002b), several meta-analyses or pooled analyses have been published, showing a positive association between ELF-MF exposure and childhood leukaemia. A recent meta-analysis of case–control studies by Seomun et al. (2021), including both studies included in the previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 2002b) and new studies, reported a summary OR for childhood leukaemia

of 1.26 (95% CI, 1.06–1.49) for an ELF-MF of 0.2  $\mu$ T, while those exposed to 0.4  $\mu$ T had an OR of 1.72 (95% CI, 1.25–2.35). Another pooled analysis, including only four recent case–control studies (Pedersen et al., 2015; Salvan et al., 2015; Bunch et al., 2016; Kheifets et al., 2017), reported no association with childhood leukaemia; however, the exposure assessment methods in those studies were weaker (Amoon et al., 2022). The proximity of children’s households to high voltage cable lines and occupational exposure by their parents to ELF-MF during certain periods before or during pregnancy were inconsistently associated with childhood leukaemia (Talibov et al., 2019; Park, 2023).

A recent case–control study in Italy reported an excess risk for both overall leukaemia and ALL among children with residential distances < 100 m from power lines (Malagoli et al., 2023), while no overall association between residential proximity to transformer stations and childhood leukaemia was detected (Malavolti et al., 2023). An international study of childhood leukaemia in residences near electrical transformer rooms found weak evidence for an elevated risk (Crespi et al., 2024).

An increased risk of AML was reported in workers with occupational exposure to high levels of ELF-MF (Koeman et al., 2014) and for high levels and a long duration (Huss et al., 2018). In the general adult population, significant associations between cumulative duration of living < 50 m from high voltage lines and all brain tumours (OR, 2.94; 95% CI, 1.28–6.75) and glioma (OR, 4.96; 95% CI, 1.56–15.77) were found (Carles et al., 2020). In a cohort study on adult haematological malignancies and brain tumours in relation to magnetic fields from indoor transformer stations, the HR for glioma was 1.47 (95% CI, 0.84–2.57) (Khan et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

The previous IARC evaluation concluded that there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of ELF-MF. This conclusion was based on the evaluation of four long-term bioassays, and several multistage carcinogenesis studies to evaluate the effect of ELF-MF alone or in combination with other carcinogens (IARC, 2002b). Among those four studies, three provide no evidence that exposure to ELF-MF causes cancer in any target organ. The fourth found an increased incidence of thyroid C-cell tumours in male rats exposed to ELF-MF at two intermediate flux densities. In addition, several other studies of limited design, or multistage carcinogenesis studies had mixed results (IARC, 2002b).

Since then, one study evaluated the possible carcinogenic effects of exposure to ELF-MF on male and female Sprague-Dawley rats from prenatal life until natural death and concluded that lifespan exposures to continuous and intermittent ELF-MF, alone, did not represent a significant risk factor for neoplastic development (Bua et al., 2018). One study conducted in mice observed that long-term exposure to ELF-MF induced the development of cancer. C57BL/6NJ female mice were exposed in late pregnancy to ELF-MF for 1 week and their offspring were exposed for 15.5 months. In female mice, the incidence of chronic myeloid leukaemia in the exposed group was significantly greater than in the control group (Qi et al., 2015). Other studies investigating the tumour-promoting effect of ELF-MF showed that lifespan exposure to ELF-MF in combination with formaldehyde, or with acute low-dose gamma radiation might enhance the carcinogenic effects in Sprague-Dawley rats (Soffritti et al., 2016a, b). In an initiation–promotion study using DMBA as an initiator in Fischer 344 rats, ELF-MF promote mammary tumorigenesis (Fedrowitz and Löscher, 2008).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 2002b) concluded that the studies reporting an increased frequency of chromosomal aberrations and micronuclei induced by ELF-MF were inconclusive. Since then, other studies investigating the genotoxicity of ELF-MF in exposed humans are available. Most investigations were on PBLs. In some of the studies, buccal epithelial cells were also investigated. A review of studies on the genotoxicity of ELF-MF in exposed humans indicated inconsistent results (Maes and Verschaeve, 2016).

In addition, occupational exposure to ELF-MF in a power plant increased the frequency of single-strand breaks in DNA in 29 male utility workers but not in control subjects (Zendehdel et al., 2019). Other studies have reported no evidence that exposure to ELF-MF causes genotoxicity in exposed humans or human primary cells (Albert et al., 2009; Lv et al., 2021b).

In addition, several studies, mostly conducted in human cell lines and experimental systems, suggested that ELF-MF exhibits other KCs besides genotoxicity, especially the induction of epigenetic alterations (Giorgi and Del Re, 2021), oxidative stress (Schuermann and Mevissen, 2021), and cell proliferation (Barati et al., 2021).

### Summary

There are only a few new scientific papers since the publication of *IARC Monographs* Volume 80, with weak exposure assessment and showing a weaker association. Overall, evidence remains consistent in showing an association between exposure to ELF magnetic fields and childhood leukaemia, based largely on studies evaluated in the previous monograph. New initiation–promotion studies show tumour-promoting activity of ELF-MF. Since the previous evaluation, new mechanistic studies related to the KCs in experimental systems, and new studies evaluating the genotoxicity of ELF-MF in exposed humans, became available. However, the findings across all systems remain inconsistent. Overall, the available information does not support a re-evaluation. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ELF-MF is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 099 Radiofrequency electromagnetic fields including wireless mobile radiation

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Radiofrequency electromagnetic field (RF-EMF) radiation (including from wireless mobile telephones) has been previously classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 102 in 2011 (IARC, 2013a), based on *limited* evidence in humans for glioma and acoustic neuroma. RF-EMF was given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new cancer bioassay evidence in two independent studies (described below).

WHO is undertaking a health risk assessment of RF-EMF for a variety of outcomes, including cancer. This will be published as a monograph in the *Environmental Health Criteria* series and is based on several, currently ongoing, systematic reviews commissioned by WHO (Lagorio et al., 2021; Mevissen et al., 2022).

### Exposure characterization

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 102, RF-EMF radiation was defined as radiation in the frequency range 30 kHz to 300 GHz (IARC, 2013a). Exposure occurs in the general population and in occupational settings, with sources including mobile phones, wireless network, television, radio, 5G technologies, Bluetooth, microwaves, cooking hobs, industrial heating of materials, radar, anti-theft devices, and MRI (IARC, 2013a). Exposure to mobile phones is ubiquitous, considering that nearly 95% of the population in high-income countries and 49% in low-income countries own a mobile phone (International Telecommunications Union, 2022). Source-exposure matrices for the general population and workers are available (Vila et al., 2016; van Wel et al., 2021).

## Cancer in humans

The 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a) indicated that results from epidemiological studies published after *IARC Monographs* Volume 102 were mixed (Benson et al., 2013; Hardell et al., 2013; Coureau et al., 2014; IARC, 2019a; Rösli et al., 2019). Since the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), results from the MOBI-Kids study, an international study of brain cancer and the use of EMF technology by children and adolescents (Castaño-Vinyals et al., 2022), the update of the UK Million Women Study (Schüz et al., 2022), and the European Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health (COSMOS) (Feychting et al., 2024) were published. No increased risk of neuroepithelial brain tumour was found in the MOBI-Kids study (Castaño-Vinyals et al., 2022). In the Million Women Study update, the increased risk for acoustic neuroma reported previously (10+ years use versus never, RR, 2.46; 95% CI, 1.07–5.64) (Benson et al., 2013) was attenuated (10+ years use versus never, RR, 1.32; 95% CI, 0.89–1.96), and no increased risk was found for other cancer subtypes (glioma, glioblastoma, pituitary, eye tumour); however, the exposure assessment was crude. The previous analysis (Benson et al., 2013) reported  $P_{\text{trend}} = 0.03$  for acoustic neuroma by duration of use, but such an analysis was not reported in the updated publication (Schüz et al., 2022). COSMOS followed 264 574 participants for a median of 7.12 years (recruitment, 2007–2012, in Denmark, Finland, the Netherlands, Sweden, and the UK). For 100 regression-calibrated cumulative hours of calls (country-specific regression-calibrated estimates based on data collected from operators were applied to the self-reported measurements), HRs were 1.00 (95% CI, 0.98–1.02) for glioma, 1.01 (95% CI, 0.96–1.06) for meningioma, and 1.02 (95% CI, 0.99–1.06) for acoustic neuroma (Feychting et al., 2024).

Mobile phone use was associated with increases in overall cancer and NMSC, urinary cancer (in men only), prostate cancer, and vulva cancer, but not brain cancer, in the UK Biobank cohort (Zhang et al., 2024). There was also a significant trend by length of use for NMSC and prostate cancer (Zhang et al., 2024). Concern exists over exposure misclassification, as mobile phone use was captured only at baseline. These findings are not consistent with those of a Danish nationwide cohort study (Schüz et al., 2006).

In *IARC Monographs* Volume 102 (IARC, 2013a), selection bias and recall bias from case-control studies were noted as being of major concern. Bias analysis available at the time of that evaluation showed that the J-shaped response curve observed in the Interphone study, the largest case-control study on mobile phone use contributing to the evidence published in *IARC Monographs* Volume 102 (IARC, 2013a), could have been explained by selection bias, leading to underrepresentation of unexposed controls (Vrijheid et al., 2009a). A recent bias analysis using Monte Carlo simulations showed that the J-shaped relation observed in the Interphone study was compatible with a scenario of greater systematic (> 10%) and random error in cases compared with controls, in the absence of any effect (Bouaoun et al., 2024). Validation studies within the Interphone study showed that there was little differential exposure misclassification between cases and controls; however, in heavy users, overestimation was greater in cases than in controls (Vrijheid et al., 2009b).

## Cancer in experimental animals

The 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a) noted the availability of new data from the large US NTP study that show clear evidence of an increased incidence of malignant schwannoma in the heart (and possibly some evidence of malignant glioma in the brain) in male rats exposed to radiofrequency radiation at frequencies used by mobile phones; however, no clear increased risk was seen in female rats. Some equivocal evidence was observed of increased evidence of malignant glioma in the brain, malignant schwannoma in the heart, and pheochromocytoma in the adrenal medulla (NTP, 2018a, b). An increased risk of schwannoma of the heart observed in male rats exposed to the highest dose was found in an experimental study conducted at the Ramazzini Institute (Falcioni et al., 2018). International studies, aimed to verify the NTP studies, are ongoing in Japan and the Republic of Korea and are expected in 2024 (Ahn et

al., 2022). Currently, a systematic review of the effects of RF-EMF on cancer laboratory animals is ongoing as part of a WHO risk assessment project (Mevisen et al., 2022).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a): “The previous IARC evaluation concluded that there was weak evidence that radiofrequency radiation was genotoxic but that there was no evidence for mutagenicity (IARC, 2013a).” Since then, there have been many new publications on the genotoxicity of RF-EMF radiation, including studies in exposed humans. The formation of micronuclei on buccal mucosal cells was shown in several studies on mobile phone-emitted radiation (Rashmi et al., 2020; Revanth et al., 2020). Other studies found no evidence of micronucleus formation (de Oliveira et al., 2017) or no conclusive evidence for induction of DNA damage or for alterations of the DNA repair capacity in human cells exposed to several frequencies of RF-EMF radiation (Schuermann et al., 2020). In other studies, no effects of RF-EMF exposure on oxidant or antioxidant capacity, apoptosis, or mutations in the TP53 gene were revealed, regardless of the frequency (Khalil et al., 2014; Gulati et al., 2020). The authors of a meta-analysis to investigate whether RF-EMF emitted by mobile phones have genotoxic or cytotoxic effects on the oral epithelium concluded that the evidence for genotoxic effects was weak (Dos Santos et al., 2020). In experimental systems, there is a large body of literature on investigations of the genotoxicity of RF-EMF (Meltz, 2003). A study showed that rat gliomas appear to share some genetic alterations with IDH1 wildtype human gliomas, and rat cardiac schwannomas also harbour mutations in some of the queried cancer genes (Brooks et al., 2024). An independent systematic review of the genotoxicity of RF-EMF in in vitro mammalian models is ongoing (Romeo et al., 2021).

In addition, evidence associated with other KCs is available. For example, chronic exposure to RF-EMF emitted from mobile phones may induce oxidative stress and an inflammatory response in rats (Singh et al., 2020). Currently, a systematic review of the effects of RF-EMF on biomarkers of oxidative stress in vivo and in vitro is ongoing as part of the WHO risk assessment project (Henschenmacher et al., 2022). Several studies have investigated the immunotoxicity of RF-EMF (Yadav et al., 2022). Mobile phone radiofrequency radiation was found to be associated with thyroid gland insufficiency and alterations in serum thyroid hormone levels in exposed humans and in rodents, with a possible disruption in the hypothalamic–pituitary–thyroid axis (Alkayyali et al., 2021).

### **Summary**

Since the last evaluation, there have been several new high-quality studies. Overall, the human cancer evidence is mixed. There is new evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals. Since the previous evaluation, there is new mechanistic evidence related to the KCs, especially genotoxicity in experimental systems and in exposed humans. However, several of the genotoxicity studies in exposed humans provided inconsistent results. Thus, the mechanistic available evidence currently available may be inconclusive.

Overall, the new evidence regarding cancer in humans and in experimental animals could support a re-evaluation, although a change in the current classification of the carcinogenicity of RF-EMF is uncertain. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of RF-EMF to be warranted but suggests an evaluation in the latter half of the next 5 years, to await the results of ongoing cancer bioassays, which may provide additional mechanistic evidence.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 100 Radon-222 and its decay products (CAS No. 14859-67-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Radon-222 and its decay products were repeatedly classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1), most recently in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100D in 2009 (IARC, 2012e), when there was found to be *sufficient* evidence for cancer in humans for lung cancer and *limited* evidence in humans for leukaemia. WHO has published a handbook on reducing harmful health effects from indoor radon exposure (WHO, 2009b).

### Exposure characterization

Radon is a naturally occurring radioactive gas, which decays into other radioactive progeny. Among the different isotopes of radon, radon-222 is the most prevalent in the environment, owing to its longest half-life (3.82 days), compared with other radon isotopes (IARC, 2012e). Thus, radon in the environment is mainly constituted of radon-222. Exposure to radon progeny is widespread from natural background radiation, enhanced natural background radiation (e.g. concentrated indoors in basement areas with poor ventilation), and occupational sources, with high concentrations occurring in some scenarios globally, for example in areas with high soil concentrations, where gases may be trapped indoors in subterranean living areas, in underground mines and tourist caves, and in water treatment facilities (Daniels and Schubauer-Berigan, 2017; Hosoda et al., 2021). The annual per capita dose in the USA from inhalation of radon gas and its progeny typically represents about half of the effective dose received by members of the general population from all natural sources of ionizing radiation. For certain occupations, radon and its progeny also dominate occupational radiation exposure. For example, in the nuclear fuel cycle, radon inhaled after its release from uranium mines makes a substantial contribution to workers' doses (UNSCEAR, 2019).

### Cancer in humans

The evidence available on leukaemia risk after radon exposure in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100D (IARC, 2012e) consisted mainly of studies conducted among uranium miners. A combined analysis of 11 underground miner cohorts found no increase in leukaemia risk (Darby et al., 1995), and no association of leukaemia was observed in a separate large cohort of miners in Germany (Kreuzer et al., 2008). However, a significant trend in relation to duration and cumulative exposure among miners in Czechia was noted, but the contribution of external gamma radiation was unclear (Tomásek and Zárská, 2004; Tomásek and Kubík, 2006). It was further noted in *IARC Monographs* Volume 100D that most case–control studies of leukaemia, including childhood leukaemia, had null findings. Notably, the Working Group for *IARC Monographs* Volume 100D considered ecological studies to be less informative than cohort and case–control studies.

Since 2009, new findings related to leukaemia in adults or children have been published, including three meta-analyses. A dose–response meta-analysis examined 9 case–control, 8 ecological, and 15 ecological–cohort studies. In the ecological studies, positive correlations were observed for radon air concentrations and leukaemia among adults ( $P = 0.46$ ; 95% CI, 0.05–0.74) and children ( $P = 0.67$ ; 95% CI, 0.53–0.77). For case–control studies, the dose–response meta-analysis found significantly positive pooled exposure–response estimates for lymphoid leukaemia (meta-OR, 1.0361; 95% CI, 1.0014–1.0720), myeloid leukaemia (meta-RR, 1.2257; 95% CI, 1.0034–1.4972), and childhood leukaemia (meta-OR, 1.0309; 95% CI, 1.0050–1.0575), each measured per 100 Bq/m<sup>3</sup> increase in radon dose (Moon and Yoo, 2021). Another meta-analysis (Ngoc et al., 2022) identified 13 studies (8 case–control, 5 cohort) that examined residential radon exposure in relation to childhood leukaemia; 5 of these studies (Bräuner et al., 2010; Del Risco Kollerud et al., 2014; Pedersen et al., 2014; Demoury et al., 2017; Nikkilä et al., 2020) were published since the previous evaluation. Among the case–control studies, the meta-OR for the highest compared with lowest exposure category was 1.43 (95% CI, 1.19–1.71), with low heterogeneity, and among the cohort studies the meta-RR

was 1.15 (95% CI, 0.92–1.45), with higher heterogeneity. There was little evidence of a dose–response pattern among the ORs for the case–control studies. A third meta-analysis (Lu et al., 2020b) identified another study that had some positive findings for childhood leukaemia (Hauri et al. (2013).

For cancers other than lung cancer and leukaemia, few studies have been published since the previous evaluation. A recent review (Reddy et al., 2022) cites several null cohort studies for skin cancer but indicates several studies with ecological metrics of exposure that suggest a positive association for melanoma.

In the Pooled Uranium Miners Analysis (PUMA), which pools seven cohorts of uranium miners in Canada, Czechia, France, Germany, and the USA, increased SMRs have been observed for some cancers other than lung cancer (e.g. cancers of the stomach, liver and gall bladder, and larynx), but exposure–response associations have not yet been published (Richardson et al., 2021).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There remains uncertainty about the extent to which radon progeny can irradiate tissues outside the respiratory tract. However, exposure of uranium miners to tissues of the digestive tract is plausible, owing to mucociliary clearance after inhalation exposure.

### **Summary**

Emerging evidence suggests that childhood leukaemia and some forms of leukaemia in adults may be associated with exposure to radon progeny, although most of the evidence arises from studies of residential radon, which may be more susceptible to unmeasured or residual confounding, owing to the low doses involved. Important emerging evidence for cancers other than lung cancer (e.g. cancers of the larynx, brain, kidney, and stomach, leukaemia, and multiple myeloma) is expected in the next few years from the PUMA cohort, which could provide key evidence for an evaluation (Rage et al., 2020). The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of radon-222 and its decay products to be warranted, timed for the latter half of the 5-year period.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## **101 Very hot beverages and very hot food**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Drinking very hot beverages, at temperatures above 65 °C or above, was classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in *IARC Monographs* Volume 116 in 2016 (IARC, 2018a), on the basis of *limited* evidence of carcinogenicity in both human (for SCC of the oesophagus) and animals. Very hot foods and beverages were given a priority rating of *high* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), based on findings of an association with oesophageal cancer in humans.

### **Exposure characterization**

Very hot beverages and very hot food are defined as having temperatures > 65 °C when consumed. Tea and coffee stand out as the most widely consumed hot beverages globally (IARC, 2018a). Although there are recommendations for the appropriate temperatures for hot beverages, the preferred consumption temperatures vary across different contexts. In addition, in epidemiological studies, it is crucial to differentiate between brewing temperatures and serving temperatures (Abraham and Diller, 2019). Furthermore, reliance solely on temperature, often determined by self-reported drinking temperature, is unreliable and lacks comprehensiveness as a metric for evaluating human exposure to very hot foods and beverages (Middleton et al., 2019a). These challenges lead epidemiological studies to use more objective metrics and incorporate alternative exposure measures, including sip volume, temperature throughout a



drinking episode, drinking frequency, speed, volume, waiting time before consumption, and the frequency of burning of the mouth or tongue.

### Cancer in humans

*IARC Monographs* Volume 116 noted that there was consistent association between drinking hot beverages and an increased risk of oesophageal SCC; however, this was mainly based on case–control studies, with only one prospective study showing a positive association (IARC, 2018a). Since *IARC Monographs* Volume 116, at least two cohort studies have been published. In the first, a report of the Golestan Cohort Study, a study established from 2004 to 2008, in the Islamic Republic of Iran, 50 045 individuals aged 40–75 years were followed up for a median duration of 10.1 years. This study found that drinking hot black tea increased the risk of oesophageal SCC by more than twofold and that drinking very hot black tea increased the risk of oesophageal SCC by more than eightfold, compared with drinking warm black tea. The study's reference group consisted solely of individuals who drank tea, mostly in large amounts, at lower temperatures. This approach might offer more robust evidence regarding the association between tea-drinking temperature and risk of oesophageal SCC, compared with scenarios where the reference group includes those who did not drink tea or those who consumed tea infrequently. The study employed both objective and self-reported metrics for exposure assessment, enhancing the reliability of its findings. Different measures were found to be significantly associated with the risk of oesophageal SCC (Islami et al., 2020).

In another prospective cohort study, conducted from 2004 to 2008 in China, in over 450 000 participants followed up until 2015 (median follow-up of 9.2 years) and comprising 1731 incidence cases of oesophageal cancer, findings indicated that combining high-temperature tea consumption with either alcohol consumption or smoking was associated with a higher risk of oesophageal cancer, compared with the risk associated with hot tea consumption alone (Yu et al., 2018). The participants' tea consumption was self-reported once at baseline, introducing a potential source of non-differential measurement error. Additionally, the study primarily focused on exploring the interaction between alcohol consumption and smoking with hot tea consumption, and thus might be of little informativeness for the evaluation of hot beverages alone.

At least three recently published population-based case–control studies were conducted in China (Tai et al., 2017; Yang et al., 2018; Lin et al., 2020). All those studies indicated a positive and strong association between the temperature of consumed beverages (beverages and food together in Tai et al., 2017) with risk of oesophageal SCC. In addition to population-based case–control studies in China, two reports of the Esophageal Squamous Cell Carcinoma African Prevention Research (ESSCAPE) study have recently been published, one from Malawi and the United Republic of Tanzania (Masukume et al., 2022), and the other from Kenya (Middleton et al., 2019b). In these reports, it was observed that consumption of very hot beverages (which also included porridge) was strongly associated with oesophageal SCC risk, and the association was consistent in different subgroups and several exposure metrics. Masukume et al. (2022) also showed positive associations for hot porridge consumption as separate metrics. Considering that these studies are the first reports from the geographical area, they are likely to be informative for evaluating the consistency of the association between very hot beverages and food and risk of oesophageal SCC.

Furthermore, two recent meta-analyses, one comprising a total of 23 reports with 5050 cases and 10 609 controls, and the other encompassing a total of 12 case–control studies with 5253 cases and 8273 controls, found that the consumption of hot tea significantly increased the risk of oesophageal SCC (Luo and Ge, 2022; Zhong et al., 2022).

A recent meta-analysis, including only studies published in countries in Africa (11 studies), found a meta-RR for consumption of hot beverages or food and risk of oesophageal SCC of 1.68 (95% CI, 1.13–2.49) (Simba et al., 2023). In that analysis, hot food and beverages were combined as an indicator of potential oesophageal injury resulting from exposure to high temperatures (Simba et al., 2023).

### Cancer in experimental animals

No new studies of cancer in experimental animals published since the previous evaluation were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

New mechanistic evidence associated with the KCs is sparse. Ernst et al. (2021) described the effect of drinking hot beverages on exfoliated cells of the oral mucosa sampled from a group of 73 participants from a region in the northern Islamic Republic of Iran. An increase in the cell division rate of the mucosa, without an increase in the frequency of micronucleus formation, was observed in subjects consuming  $\geq 3$  cups of hot beverage daily over a period of 21 days (Ernst et al., 2021). One study described in a series of oesophageal SCC models (in vitro and in vivo) the potential of hot water (65 °C) to induce cell proliferation and non-neoplastic lesions to malignant phenotypes through the expression of miR-132-3p, a miRNA known to be highly expressed in various cancer types (Wang et al., 2023g).

### Summary

Evidence of an increased risk of oesophageal SCC associated with drinking very hot beverages has strengthened with positive findings from a very informative cohort study and several other case–control studies conducted in geographically diverse populations, some of them including food other than beverages in the exposure metrics. There is no new evidence for cancer in experimental animals, and little mechanistic evidence is available since *IARC Monographs* Volume 116 (IARC, 2019a). Overall, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of very hot beverages and very hot food to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 102 Dietary salt intake

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Dietary salt intake has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Chinese-style salted fish was classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in Volume 100E in 2009 (IARC, 2012f). Pickled vegetables (traditional Asian) were classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 56 in 1992 (IARC, 1993a). The JECFA assessed dietary salt intake in 1985 (FAO/WHO, 1986).

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a):

Salt is used in cooking and food preservation. The main dietary sources of salt are processed foods, such as bread, pizza, and other industrially processed foods, and salt-preserved foods, such as processed meats, salted meats or fish, and pickled vegetables. Table salt contributes little to total salt intake. The average adult intake of salt varies by country, from less than 6 g to 18 g per day.

### Cancer in humans

As mentioned in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), there are studies of human populations showing that salting as a food preparation method is associated with an increased risk of stomach cancer. However, there are issues related to confounding by *Helicobacter pylori* infection. A review of the recent

literature suggests that there are also large challenges in separating dietary salt intake from processed meat consumption, which is classified by IARC as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As described in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), “numerous studies in animals infected with *H. pylori* have shown an increased incidence of gastric cancer with high-salt diets (Fox et al., 1999; Bergin et al., 2003).”

### **Mechanistic evidence**

As noted previously, in mechanistic studies in humans and animals, it is difficult to disentangle the effects of dietary salt intake from those of co-exposures to *H. pylori* or processed meat consumption.

### **Summary**

The Advisory Group noted that it would be very challenging to conduct a cancer hazard assessment of dietary salt intake, and it is unclear that the evidence warrants such an evaluation. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of dietary salt intake is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **103 Estragole (CAS No. 140-67-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Estragole has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Estragole is listed by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a) as a high production volume chemical.

Estragole is a volatile compound with an anise-like odour that occurs naturally in some plants, such as basil, fennel, anise, and tarragon (Bristol, 2011). Environmental persistence is expected to be low. It is used as a fragrance or flavour additive in foods, beverages, cleaning agents, and cosmetics.

The general population is widely exposed to estragole through the ingestion of food and beverages that contain estragole, either naturally (fennel tea, use of herbs) or as an additive, as well as through such consumer products as detergents and cosmetics (Bristol, 2011; Lopez et al., 2015). Electronic cigarette refill liquid and the smoke of Indian flavoured bidi cigarettes contain estragole; this makes the consumption of these products an additional exposure source (Stanfill et al., 2003; Omaiye et al., 2020). Estimates of total daily exposure range between 10 and 70 µg/kg bw per day (SCF, 2001; Smith et al., 2002). Occupational exposure might occur during the extraction of estragole or in the manufacture of estragole-containing products.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No full cancer bioassay has been conducted to assess the carcinogenicity of estragole in animals. However, 3-month toxicity studies of estragole administered by gavage to F344/N rats and B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice have shown that estragole induced two cholangiocarcinomas and one hepatocellular adenoma in the rat liver, concurrent with non-neoplastic lesions in rats and mice (Bristol, 2011).

### Mechanistic evidence

Estragole is an allyl alkoxybenzene and contains a methoxy group and an allyl group. It is structurally similar to other agents, e.g. methyleugenol, eugenol, and safrole. Of note, methyleugenol was recently classified by IARC as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) (Riboli et al., 2023; IARC, 2024a). Estragole is biotransformed to active metabolites through CYP1A2 or SULT1A1 (Jeurissen et al., 2007; Suzuki et al., 2012a). SULT1A1 also mediates the formation of DNA adducts (Phillips et al., 1984; Alhusainy et al., 2013). It can form DNA adducts in various test systems in vitro, including primary rat hepatocytes, and in vivo (Randerath et al., 1984; Painsi et al., 2012; Ding et al., 2015; Yang et al., 2020a). Estragole is not mutagenic in bacteria; however, mutagenicity was reported in a humanized model of *Salmonella* strains engineered with human sulfotransferases (Oda et al., 2012). It was shown to induce UDS, SCE, and DNA damage, by the comet assay, in cells in vitro and to induce gene mutation in transgenic rodents (Martins et al., 2012; Suzuki et al., 2012b). Cell proliferation, in combination with DNA adducts and mutations, was observed in liver tissues of rats exposed to estragole, and inhibition of protein phosphatase 2A (PP2A) seemed to contribute to the estragole effects (Auerbach et al., 2010; Ishii et al., 2017).

### Summary

No studies on human cancer after exposure to estragole were available to the Advisory Group. There is evidence that estragole induces tumours in the liver of rats. The Advisory Group noted that these tumours are very rare in animals of the age used in the study and considered them treatment-related. There is mechanistic evidence that estragole exhibits KCs, including electrophilicity and genotoxicity, mainly from experimental systems but also from humanized models. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of estragole to be warranted and recommends evaluating estragole together with another alkoxybenzene, safrole (agent 024), described in the present report.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years).

## 104 Indole-3-carbinol (CAS No. 700-06-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Indole-3-carbinol (I3C) has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. I3C was given a priority rating of *medium* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of positive findings in a bioassay performed by the US NTP.

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a):

Exposure to I3C through cruciferous vegetables is highly dependent on dietary patterns (Fujioka et al., 2014; Baenas et al., 2017). I3C is also available in dietary supplements, alone or in combination with a variety of herbs and/or vitamins. Clinical trials of oral administration have been performed for ovarian cancer and breast cancer, showing that co-treatment with I3C improves cancer outcomes (Thomson et al., 2017; Kiselev et al., 2018).

## **Cancer in humans**

The 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities noted that human cancer studies have generally shown evidence of a protective association of I3C with various types of cancer in case–control and cohort studies, as well as clinical trials.

## **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the NTP bioassay (NTP, 2017), I3C was found to increase the incidence of malignant uterine neoplasms (primarily adenocarcinoma), as well as fibroma and fibrosarcoma in the skin of female Harlan Sprague-Dawley rats. In male B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice, I3C increased the incidence of hepatocellular adenoma, HCC, hepatoblastoma, and their combination (NTP, 2017). Conversely, the cancer chemopreventive properties (and therapeutic properties) of I3C have been highly investigated in recent years, and there are also long-term studies in rodents showing protective effects against cancer. For example, I3C has been found to inhibit tumorigenesis in rodents (Benninghoff and Williams, 2013; Baena Ruiz and Salinas Hernández, 2016; de Moura et al., 2018).

## **Mechanistic evidence**

A review of the literature associated with the KCs indicates more studies showing preventive mechanisms than mechanisms associated with induction of the KCs. For example, mechanistic studies have found that I3C exhibits a broad spectrum of effects relevant to the KCs or cancer prevention, including effects on apoptosis, cell cycle progression, hormonal homeostasis, DNA repair, angiogenesis, and multiple drug resistance (Weng et al., 2008).

## **Summary**

Human cancer studies have generally shown cancer-protective effects of I3C. The heterogeneity of the bioassay and mechanistic evidence would complicate the cancer hazard assessment of I3C. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of I3C is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

# **105 Isoflavones**

## **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Isoflavones and the broader class of phytoestrogens have not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Isoflavones and phytoestrogens were given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

## **Exposure characterization**

The main isoflavones are genistein, daidzein, glycitein, formononetin, biochanin A, and puerarin. Humans are exposed to isoflavones and phytoestrogens primarily from the dietary consumption of soybeans and soy products, as well as other legumes. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), exposure is highest in certain countries in Asia (Spagnuolo et al., 2015; Applegate et al., 2018).

## **Cancer in humans**

As described in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), most of the available studies of cancer in humans have shown inverse or null associations with genistein and other phytoestrogen exposures.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

A study conducted by the US NTP in female rats exposed to genistein from conception until the age of 2 years found an excess of tumours of the mammary gland and pituitary gland (NTP, 2007a). In mice, genistein was shown to enhance proliferation and metastasis of patient-derived prostate cancer cells (Nakamura et al., 2011).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Some clinical trials have shown soy supplementation to increase the breast cell proliferation rate of premenopausal women (McMichael-Phillips et al., 1998) or increase the expression of genes associated with possible adverse effects in premenopausal women (Khan et al., 2012).

However, the cancer chemopreventive properties (and therapeutic properties) of isoflavones have been highly investigated in recent years. The mechanistic evidence in vivo and in vitro further emphasized the chemopreventive potential of genistein (Tuli et al., 2019), in view of which genistein has been upscaled to clinical trials (Khan et al., 2012). A study has shown the promising role of genistein in combination with the FOLFOX (folinic acid, fluorouracil, oxaliplatin) chemotherapy regimen to treat metastatic CRC (Pintova et al., 2019). In addition, epidemiological data also suggest that isoflavone may be associated with a reduction in the risk of breast cancer (Trock et al., 2006; Zhao et al., 2019). Overall, the data, albeit not consistent regarding a potential risk reduction, appear to exclude an adverse effect of exposure to dietary isoflavones, at the intake levels investigated, on the incidence of breast cancer for pre- and postmenopausal women (Hüser et al., 2018).

The Advisory Group also noted that it may be of interest to consider possible estrogenic effects in postmenopausal women and prepubertal boys. A systematic review noted that, in postmenopausal women, urinary excretion of estrone (E1), progesterone, FSH, LH, and sex hormone-binding globulin (SHBG) was not modulated by isoflavone treatment, and suggested that isoflavone intake does not affect estrogen homeostasis (Finkeldey et al., 2021). Additional research would be helpful to investigate any differential response of pre- and postmenopausal women to isoflavones.

### **Summary**

Given the lack of evidence of human cancer and mechanistic findings, the Advisory Group considered it premature to conduct a cancer hazard identification for genistein and other isoflavones and phytoestrogens and therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of isoflavones is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **106 Sucralose (CAS No. 56038-13-2)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Sucralose has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Sucralose was given a priority rating of *low* by the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs* during 2020–2024 (IARC, 2019a).

### **Exposure characterization**

Sucralose is a widely used non-nutritive sweetener found in various foods, including baked goods, beverages, chewing gum, gelatins, and frozen dairy desserts (US FDA, 2023d). It was originally approved for use as a food ingredient in Canada in 1991. In 1998, the US FDA authorized the use of sucralose, initially in a limited number of foods and beverages, and later for use in all categories of foods and beverages. In 2004, the EU approved the use of sucralose in a variety of products. The ADI of sucralose was established

at 5 mg/kg bw in the USA and 15 mg/kg bw in the EU (Soffritti et al., 2016). Sucralose is currently approved for use in more than 80 countries (Brusick et al., 2010). Even for high-intake consumers, average daily intakes are probably less than 3 mg/kg per day (Magnuson et al., 2017).

### **Cancer in humans**

There are no specific studies on sucralose and cancer in humans, but there have been studies of non-nutritive sweeteners and the risk of cancer. In the French NutriNet-Santé cohort, it was estimated that sucralose represented 9.7% of all artificial sweeteners consumed in that population (Debras et al., 2022). While overall consumption of artificial sweeteners, and of aspartame more specifically, was associated with a small, but statistically significant increase in the risk of cancer, the data were not adequate to analyse sucralose separately because of the relatively low proportion of sucralose-containing foods consumed by the population. In this, as well as in other prospective cohort studies, most of the intake of artificial sweeteners was as saccharin or aspartame, rather than sucralose.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Two studies, one in mice and one in rats, were negative (Mann et al., 2000a, b). The carcinogenicity of sucralose was evaluated by exposing mice or rats to dietary concentrations at the highest dose, 3.0% of sucralose for up to 104 weeks after parturition. Sucralose did not increase the incidence of any tumour in either mice or rats (Mann et al., 2000a, 2000b).

A recent lifespan study in mice, with sucralose administered in feed beginning prenatally (from 12 days of gestation) through the lifespan, reported a significant dose-related increase in the incidence of haematopoietic neoplasia in male mice, but not in female mice (Soffritti et al., 2016).

Recent review papers have further refuted the carcinogenicity of sucralose (Berry et al., 2016; Chappell et al., 2020). However, a study reported that sucralose promotes the risk of colitis-associated CRC in a mouse model, along with changes in microbiota (Li et al., 2020c).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Sucralose tested negative in several genotoxicity screening assays, with the exception of an independent comet assay (Sharma et al., 2007; Brusick et al., 2010; Kundu et al., 2020; Schiffman et al., 2023). However, some studies report positive results for genotoxicity; sucralose induced DNA damage in gastrointestinal organs of mice (Sasaki et al., 2002) and caused DNA damage and oxidative stress in the blood cells of *Cyprinus carpio* (Heredia-García et al., 2019). In addition, sucralose promoted ROS accumulation and adipogenesis in human adipose tissue-derived mesenchymal stromal cells (Kundu et al., 2020). Pasqualli et al. (2020a) observed genotoxicity and mutagenicity effects in cultured human lymphocytes, accompanied by cytotoxicity (Pasqualli et al., 2020a).

Several studies report the induction of oxidative stress (KC5) in experimental systems in vitro and in vivo (Heredia-García et al., 2019; Kundu et al., 2020; Schiffman et al., 2023); chronic inflammation (KC6) (Bian et al., 2017; Bessler and Djaldetti, 2019; Li et al., 2020c; Aguayo-Guerrero et al., 2023), alteration of the immune response (KC7) (Rahiman and Pool, 2014; Rosales-Gómez et al., 2018; Pasqualli et al., 2020a; Zani et al., 2023), and KC10 (Dhurandhar et al., 2018; Lizunkova et al., 2019; Shil et al., 2020). Sucralose activates taste receptors and has been shown to affect gut microbiota.

Heavy sucralose ingestion during pregnancy affects neonates' anthropometric, metabolic, and inflammatory features (Aguayo-Guerrero et al., 2023). Sucralose may increase the risk of developing tissue inflammation by disrupting the gut microbiota; this is supported by elevated proinflammatory gene expression in the liver of sucralose-treated mice (Bian et al., 2017). Conversely, sucralose was found to inhibit the induction of proinflammatory and increased anti-inflammatory cytokine release of human PBMCs co-cultured with colon cancer cells (Bessler and Djaldetti, 2019).

## Summary

There are no studies investigating sucralose and human cancer risk. From the available studies in experimental animals, only one showed an increased incidence of tumours in male rats. It is noted that the effect of inflammation and immune responses within animal facilities should be carefully evaluated when interpreting the results of haematopoietic neoplasia induction in studies of sucralose carcinogenicity.

There is some evidence that sucralose exhibits the KCs of oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation and cell proliferation, cell death, and nutrient supply. However, several of the studies are of questionable quality. Overall, the Advisory Group does not recommend an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of sucralose.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 107 Sweetened beverage consumption, including sugar-sweetened beverages and artificially sweetened beverages

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Sweetened beverage consumption, including sugar-sweetened beverages (SSBs) and artificially sweetened beverages (ASBs) have not been previously specifically evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Three specific artificial sweeteners (aspartame, cyclamates, and saccharin) have been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Aspartame was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans, specifically for HCC (IARC, 2024a). Saccharin and cyclamates were evaluated by IARC as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) (IARC, 1999b). Studies of ASBs were considered in the recent evaluation of aspartame only to the extent to which they reflected primarily aspartame exposure (IARC, 2024a).

### Exposure characterization

SSBs are any liquids that are sweetened with various forms of added sugar, such as brown sugar, corn sweetener, corn syrup, dextrose, fructose, glucose, high-fructose corn syrup, honey, lactose, malt syrup, maltose, molasses, raw sugar, or sucrose. Examples of SSBs include, but are not limited to, regular soda (not sugar-free), fruit drinks, sports drinks, energy drinks, sweetened waters, and coffee and tea beverages with added sugars (Chevinsky et al., 2021).

ASBs include a large variety of drinks that contain artificial sweeteners, such as aspartame, sucralose, or saccharine (Ruanpeng et al., 2017), either as a replacement of or in combination with sugar. These are mainly of industrial production, often best known on the market as diet sodas, diet soft drinks, etc.

National and international data on the number of consumers and the level of consumption of sweetened beverages per capita are not easy to summarize and compare because of the different types of product involved, such as naturally sweetened beverages (e.g. fruit juices), industrially sweetened drinks and soft drinks, and artificially sweetened drinks.

For the USA, the CDC reported that the prevalence of self-reported intake of SSBs at least once daily among adults, in the period between 2010 and 2015, varied from 44.5% to 76.5% (Chevinsky et al., 2021; CDC, 2022b). In Europe, based on a report from the EU, total sales of soft drinks per country ranged from 130 to over 300 L/person per year. Annual trends indicated a steady increase from 2014 until 2018, and a slight decrease in 2019 (AHFES, 2021). Daily consumption of sugary and diet soft drinks in European adolescents decreased between 2002 (2006 for diet drinks) and 2018 (Chatelan et al., 2022).

With the pervasive presence of these beverages in global markets, human exposure is widespread and occurs mainly through ingestion. Some populations have particularly high levels of consumption, such as children or individuals with specific dietary practices or health conditions.



## Cancer in humans

Some epidemiological studies have investigated the possible association between SSB and ASB consumption and a subsequent risk of developing cancer. In several studies, a specific objective was to investigate separately the association of SSB or ASB consumption with cancer. The results of a relatively small number of prospective cohort studies have been published on ASBs or SSBs or both (e.g. Chazelas et al., 2019; Mullee et al., 2019; Debras et al., 2022).

Some of the results suggested that consumption of either ASBs or SSBs, or both, may be associated with an increased risk of certain types of cancer, including breast, prostate, and CRC. In *IARC Monographs* Volume 134 (IARC, 2024a), there was an evaluation of *limited* evidence for a causal association between aspartame consumption and HCC, based on findings from three prospective studies encompassing four large cohorts (Stepien et al., 2016; Jones et al., 2022a; McCullough et al., 2022).

Some cohort studies have investigated the possible association between SSBs and cancer risk. A study conducted in combined USA cohorts (the National Institutes of Health (NIH)-American Association of Retired Persons (AARP) Diet and Health Study, and the PLCO Screening Trial) reported that, among people with diabetes, there were significant associations between consumption of sweetened beverages overall and liver cancer (HR, 1.12; 95% CI, 1.01–1.24) (Jones et al., 2022a).

One of the methodological complexities in this type of investigation is that consumption of SSBs and ASBs tend to be correlated. The NutriNet-Santé cohort collected detailed information on types and brands of foods and drinks, aimed at better classifying the type of sweetener consumed by the study participants. The study found that the consumption of sugary drinks was significantly associated with the risk of cancer overall (2193 cases; HR for 100 mL/day, 1.18; 95% CI, 1.10–1.27;  $P < 0.0001$ ) and the risk of breast cancer (693 cases; HR, 1.22; 95% CI, 1.07–1.39;  $P = 0.004$ ) (Chazelas et al., 2019).

Another methodological complexity for these investigations is that consumption of both SSBs and ASBs may be correlated with obesity, sometimes in complex and different ways, in different population subgroups. Because obesity is a known risk factor for various cancers, there is the possibility of confounding by obesity when analysing the association of ASB and SSB consumption with cancer risk. However, all large and well-conducted prospective cohort studies measured height and weight at baseline and controlled for BMI in the analysis.

## Cancer in experimental animals

Adenomatous polyposis coli (APC)-mutant mice (which are predisposed to develop intestinal tumours) treated with daily oral administration of high-fructose corn syrup, the primary sweetener in sweetened sugary beverages, showed a substantial increase in tumour size and tumour grade in the absence of obesity and metabolic syndrome (Goncalves et al., 2019). In another study of APC-mutant mice fed high-fructose corn syrup, dietary fructose led to a more severe intestinal tumour burden (Taylor et al., 2021). In a study of subcutaneous colorectal tumour grafts in mice, consumption of water containing 10% glucose, water, or water containing 10% fructose led to significantly greater tumour growth *in vivo* compared with controls, with a stronger effect observed for fructose (Cui et al., 2023). In a study of female Sprague-Dawley rats treated with *N*-methyl-*N*-nitrosourea, animals fed a high-fructose diet exhibited decreased latency in mammary tumours and an approximately twofold increase in tumour multiplicity, compared with animals fed a standard diet, without a change in body weight (Kumar et al. 2021).

## Mechanistic evidence

Several studies in experimental systems investigated the potential of single exposures to sweeteners including sucrose, molasses, corn syrup, fructose, sucralose, acesulfame potassium, and steviol, to induce genotoxicity, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, and alteration of the immune system, and, more recently, on the potential to affect gut microbiota or alter metabolism. For example, in human lymphocytes

treated with fructose at varying concentrations, an increase in DNA damage was identified using the alkaline comet assay (Pasqualli et al., 2020b). In a study in Switzerland of female mice fed water with 0%, 10%, or 20% fructose, a dose–response increase in DNA damage was observed (Magenis et al., 2020). A subsequent study in Switzerland of female mice also showed that fructose exposure (versus water only) before and during pregnancy led to higher DNA damage in the PBLs and liver cells, as well as higher levels of micronucleated erythrocytes in bone marrow samples (Magenis et al., 2023). In addition, the offspring of mothers receiving fructose before pregnancy or during pregnancy experienced increases in liver steatosis and genotoxicity. A study of male rats fed a high-fructose diet showed increased mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) damage in liver cells and reduced mtDNA copy number, a marker of impaired mitochondrial biogenesis (Cioffi et al., 2017). Recently, it was reported that long-term exposure to sucrose solution or commercial SSBs can induce oxidative stress and alter liver metabolism, or modulate receptor-mediated effects in the pancreas in experimental animals, thus altering insulin sensitivity (Schiano et al., 2020; Souza Cruz et al., 2020; Cao et al., 2021; Barzalobre-Geronimo et al., 2023; Wu et al., 2023b). Recently, exposure to SSBs has been associated with alteration of the immune system, including shortening of telomere length in leukocytes in adolescents (Wojcicki et al., 2018).

### **Summary**

Overall, there is evidence that SSBs may be associated with an increased risk of cancer in humans. In addition, there is some evidence that SSBs can induce cancer in experimental animals. Certain SSBs, mainly containing fructose, have been shown to exhibit some of the KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation in experimental systems. Evidence for ASBs is difficult to separate from the recent evaluation of aspartame. Based on the available evidence, the Advisory Group considered an evaluation of SSBs, but not ASBs, to be warranted and suggested its timing during the latter half of the evaluation period.

#### **Recommendations**

SSBs: High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

ASBs: No priority

## **108 Ultraprocessed food consumption**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Ultraprocessed food (UPF) consumption has not been previously evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

The term UPF is generally applied to foods that result from a series of industrial processes. Their chemical and physical definition is not straightforward, as they may contain, in different combinations and proportions, a large number of substances, such as flavours, flavour enhancers, colours, emulsifiers, emulsifying salts, artificial sweeteners, thickeners, foaming, anti-foaming, bulking, carbonating, gelling, and glazing agents, sugars, oils, fats, sodium chloride, and other substances (Monteiro, 2009; Monteiro et al., 2019a). UPFs tend to be ready-to-eat or easy-to-prepare foods, with a prolonged shelf life and high palatability. UPFs generally meet high standards of toxicological and microbiological safety.

The exceptionally large varieties of foods and drinks that meet some of the criteria for being labelled as UPFs represents an objective difficulty for their precise definition and characterization in epidemiological investigations of their relation with the risk of developing cancer or other chronic diseases.

A classification of foods in four categories by level of processing (the Nova classification) has been used in several nutritional and epidemiological studies for the classification of human exposure to UPFs (FAO,

2019); in this classification, group 4 comprises UPFs (i.e., formulations of ingredients of mostly industrial use, created by a series of industrial processes and techniques) (Monteiro et al., 2019b).

Consumption of UPFs has increased over the past decades in many countries around the world. Recent studies indicate that in Canada, the UK, and the USA, UPFs account for approximately 50–70% of an individual's daily total energy intake from food and drinks, while consumption remains much lower (accounting for 10% of energy intake) and is inversely associated with a “Mediterranean” diet in countries such as Italy (Marino et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in humans**

The association between UPF consumption and cancer risk has been investigated in several prospective cohort studies, and findings have been summarized in a recent meta-analysis (Isaksen and Dankel, 2023).

A publication based on the EPIC, a large population-based cohort study, estimated (using food replacement statistical modelling) that a substitution of 10% of UPFs in a participant's diet with an equal amount of minimally processed foods was associated with a reduced risk of head and neck cancer, colon cancer, and HCC (Kliemann et al., 2023).

In another population-based cohort study in > 100 000 participants from the French NutriNet-Santé cohort, similar statistical modelling found that a 10% increase in the proportion of UPFs consumed in an individual's diet was associated with a significantly increased risk of breast cancer and overall cancer development (Fiolet et al., 2018). A similar study was conducted in the UK Biobank cohort in the UK, and the results indicated that every 10 percentage points increase in UPF consumption was associated with a higher incidence of overall cancer and specifically of ovarian cancer, along with an increased risk of overall, ovarian, and breast cancer-related mortality (Chang et al., 2023a). Additionally, in three large prospective USA-based cohort studies, it was observed that men in the highest fifth percentile of UPF consumption had a 29% higher risk of developing CRC compared with men in the lowest fifth percentile of UPF consumption (Hang et al., 2023). A study in the PLCO Screening Trial cohort observed a positive association between UPF (assessed using the Nova classification) and prostate cancer, with evidence of a linear trend with exposure ( $P_{\text{trend}} = 0.021$ ) (Zhong et al., 2023b).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

UPFs include processed meats, which were evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme in 2015 in Volume 114 (IARC, 2018b). The Working Group deemed that evidence from experimental animals was *inadequate* for the carcinogenicity of consumption of processed meat. No studies of cancer in experimental animals examining the effects of levels of food processing have been identified, but single components have been evaluated for carcinogenicity.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The 2015 Working Group (IARC, 2018b) concluded that mechanistic evidence for the carcinogenicity of processed meat was *moderate*. Several observational studies of humans have identified associations between UPF consumption and increased markers of inflammation, predominantly C-reactive protein, as measured in blood (Tristan Asensi et al., 2023). Also, some studies in exposed humans have reported increased end-points of disease outcomes related to chronic inflammation, such as increases in inflammatory bowel disease and Crohn disease (Narula et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023a). Another study in humans also observed evidence of increased oxidative stress (lower activity of antioxidant enzymes and increased activity of oxidizing enzymes) in association with UPF consumption (Quetglas-Llabrés et al., 2023). Similar effects were observed in pregnant women enrolled in the Origen Bioquímico y Epigenético del Sobrepeso y la Obesidad (OBESO) perinatal cohort (Mexico) (Rodríguez-Cano et al., 2022). A study of adolescents

observed that greater consumption of UPF was associated with higher levels of oxidative DNA damage, as measured in urine (Edalati et al., 2021).

Evidence of mechanisms related to the KCs is also available from studies in experimental systems. Specific extracts from processed meat were found to induce micronucleus formation in standard tests (Chamlal et al., 2021), and processed meat has also been observed to promote inflammation in mice (Ahmad et al., 2019). Travinsky-Shmul et al. (2021) have observed that UPF can affect bone quality, adiposity, and inflammation, and induce alteration of gut microbiota of mice.

### Summary

The chemical and physical definition of UPFs is not straightforward, as they may contain different combinations and proportions of a large number of added substances. The epidemiological evidence is currently based on three large cohort studies, totalling over 1 million study participants (EPIC, NutriNet-Santé, and UK Biobank). The three studies used similar methodologies for the definition of UPFs and similar statistical approaches for data analyses. The results consistently indicate that an increase in the proportion of UPFs, of the total food and drinks consumption, is associated with a statistically significant increase in the risk of developing various types of cancer.

UPFs include a broad variety of foods; some of their components have been evaluated for carcinogenicity in experimental animals. However, no experimental studies examining UPFs in general, or varied levels of food processing, were identified.

There is evidence that UPFs may exhibit the KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation from studies in exposed humans and experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of UPFs to be warranted, with careful consideration of the UPF constituents.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 109 1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP) (CAS No. 96-12-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane (DBCP) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998, on the basis of *sufficient* evidence of cancer in experimental animals (IARC, 1999d).

### Exposure characterization

DBCP is a pesticide that has been used as a soil fumigant and was an active ingredient of nematicides. Because of its toxic health effects (sterility in men), its use in agriculture was banned in the USA in 1979. It has been extensively used in farming (e.g. bananas and pineapples) in Central America, where it caused sterilization of a large number of workers (Wesseling et al., 1996). Use in Central America was also discontinued at the end of the 1970s (Hofmann et al., 2006). In the occupational context in farming, skin is the major route of exposure (Hofmann et al., 2006). In areas with contaminated soils, oral exposure of the general population via food and drinking-water has been documented even after agricultural use was discontinued (Hart et al., 2018).

### Cancer in humans

Few publications from cohort studies are available that report on associations between exposure to DBCP and cancer risk. *Monographs* Volume 71 noted a report of excess lung cancer in a small cohort of DBCP production workers with exposure of > 1 year and a suggestive increased risk of leukaemia in a case–control study in a population exposed to contaminated drinking-water in Fresno County (USA) (IARC,

1999d). Since the last *Monographs* evaluation of DBCP in 1999 (*inadequate* evidence regarding cancer in humans), two new studies have been published. A study conducted within the Nurses' Health Study II assessing associations of air pollutants with breast cancer risk found a hazard ratio (HR) of 1.12 (95% CI, 0.98–1.29; *P* for trend, 0.004) associated with DBCP exposure, which was modelled based on the US EPA's National Air Toxics Assessment (Hart et al., 2018). Hofmann et al. (2006) reported on mortality among a cohort of banana-plantation workers in Costa Rica, which was an update on the same cohort for which cancer incidence had been described earlier and was reviewed in the previous monograph. The authors observed elevated SMRs in men for testicular cancer (SMR, 2.07 based on a local comparison), penile cancer (SMR, 2.23, national comparison), and Hodgkin lymphoma (SMR, 1.17, national comparison), and elevated SMRs in women for cervical cancer (SMR, 1.52, national comparison) and lung cancer (SMR, 1.82, national comparison).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of DBCP, on the basis of findings in various tissues from two studies by inhalation, one in F344 rats, and one in B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice, along with other positive findings from old NTP studies.

### Mechanistic evidence

DBCP is rapidly absorbed when administered orally and distributes in various tissues. Data available, mostly for rats, have shown that it is metabolized via oxidation by CYPs and conjugated with GSH. It can form water-soluble metabolites and metabolites that bind to macromolecules. Several active metabolites, such as *S*-[1-(hydroxymethyl)-2-(*N*7-guanyl)-ethyl] glutathione, have been identified in rat and other species (Søderlund et al., 1995; Weber et al., 1995). Human glutathione-*S*-transferase has been found to actively metabolize DBCP. Testis is the most sensitive tissue, especially in rats (Bjørge et al., 1995).

DBCP induces genotoxicity in several experimental systems. Most of the data from the classical genotoxicity battery in vitro and in vivo, conducted in the 1980s and 1990s and evaluated in the previous monograph, provided consistent positive findings (IARC, 1999d). In normal Clara cells and type II cells and alveolar macrophages, isolated by lavage from rabbit lungs, an increase of DNA damage measured as alkali-labile sites and/or single-strand breaks was observed after DBCP exposure (Becher et al., 1993).

In addition, increased gene mutagenicity in bacteria expressing human glutathione *S*-transferases (Simula et al., 1993) was observed in *S.typhimurium* T100 transformed strain. DNA damage, in the form of double strand breaks, as measured by alkaline filter elution, was also observed in cells from human testis obtained from 18 organ donors, as well as in cells from rat testis (Bjørge et al., 1996a; Brunborg et al., 1996). Increased DNA damage, assessed using comet assay, was also observed in human lymphocytes and sperm cells from healthy donors (Anderson et al., 1997). Chromosomal aberrations and altered DNA repair responses were described in isolated lymphocytes from a small group of farmers, several with male fertility alterations, at banana plantations in Costa Rica (Au et al., 1999). However, it was reported that workers might have been exposed to other pesticides, so these findings may be of limited relevance. Recently, DBCP was also reported to induce oxidative stress in a spermatogenic in vitro model of WA01 male human embryonic stem cells. Exposure to DBCP or the similar agent 2-bromopropane (Group 2A) generated ROS and promoted gene expression of antioxidants and detoxifying enzymes through Nrf2 (Easley et al., 2015). Evidence for DBCP inducing chronic inflammation is sparse and limited to some histopathology findings associated with nasal cavity tumours in a rat bioassay (Haseman and Hailey, 1997). DBCP has been reported to affect male fertility, causing morphological changes of the testis and affecting sperm count and morphology in rodents in vivo in several studies (IARC, 1999d). Since the previous evaluation, many new studies in both experimental systems and exposed humans have confirmed the potential of DBCP to modulate receptor-mediated effects (Olsen et al., 1990; Anderson et al., 1997; Ye et al., 2011, 2014; Moffit

et al., 2013). DCBP is structurally related to other halogenated propanes such as 2-bromopropane, 1-bromopropane and bromochloromethane (Maeng and Yu, 1997; Takeuchi et al., 1997) with which it might share the KCs of genotoxicity and effects leading to reproductive toxicity.

### Summary

There is limited use of DBCP since it was widely banned in the late 1970s; but continuing exposure through contaminated environmental media has been documented. There are sporadic findings of cancer risk associated with employment in occupations with DBCP exposure, such as on banana plantations and in pesticide manufacturing. *Sufficient* evidence is available for cancer in experimental animals and formed the basis of the current Group 2B classification. Since the previous evaluation, evidence of mechanistic end-points associated with the KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress and modulation of receptor-mediated effects, has become available from studies in exposed humans and in human primary cells and tissues in vitro. However, the mechanistic studies seem to have limitations in the exposure assessments. Due to the potential limitations of the mechanistic studies and the sparse epidemiological evidence of cancers in humans, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of 1,2-dibromo-3-chloropropane is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 110 2,4-Dichlorophenol (CAS No. 120-83-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,4-Dichlorophenol (2,4-DCP) as such has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. However, in 1999, IARC evaluated combined exposures to polychlorophenols (containing 2,4-DCP) or to their sodium salts as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) (IARC, 1999d).

### Exposure characterization

2,4-DCP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a).

2,4-DCP has been used in the synthesis of phenoxy acid herbicides, including 2,4-dichlorophenoxyacetic acid (2,4-D) and 2,4,5-trichlorophenoxyacetic acid. It can also be formed as a by-product during the manufacture of various chlorinated chemicals, in chlorination processes involving water treatment and wood-pulp bleaching, and from the incineration or combustion of municipal solid waste, coal, and wood (IARC, 1999d; CDC, 2000; PubChem, 2009; Rooney et al., 2019).

General population exposure to 2,4-DCP can occur by inhalation of contaminated air, ingestion of contaminated water or dermal contact with this lipid-soluble chemical. In addition, other chlorophenols absorbed into the body can be metabolized to 2,4-DCP (CDC, 2017). Occupational exposure may occur through inhalation and/or dermal contact in facilities that produce or use 2,4-DCP (ATSDR, 2022).

### Cancer in humans

Two case-control studies, one in northern and one in southern Sweden, showed relative risks of 5.3 (95% CI, 2.4–11.5) (Hardell and Sandström, 1979) and 6.8 (95% CI, 2.6–17.3) for soft-tissue sarcoma, (Eriksson et al., 1981) for men exposed to phenoxy acid herbicides, but the extent of exposure to 2,4-DCP was unclear in these studies. In 1977, in Sweden, a cluster of patients with malignant lymphomas and previous exposure to phenoxy acid herbicides and/or chlorophenols was reported (Hardell, 1977).

Following these reports, a cohort study was developed aimed at clarifying the potential carcinogenicity of phenoxy acid herbicides based on 2,4-DCP and 4-chloro-*ortho*-cresol (Lynge, 1985). The observation in this cohort study of five soft-tissue sarcoma cases in contrast to 1.84 expected among males supports the

Swedish observation of an excess risk of soft-tissue sarcomas after exposure to phenoxy acid herbicides based on 2,4-DCP. However, as with the earlier studies, the role of 2,4-DCP itself in the findings of Lynge (1985) is unclear.

Rooney et al. (2019) evaluated associations of urinary concentrations of 2,4-DCP with prevalence of various medical conditions among 3617 US National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey participants from 2007–2008 and 2009–2010 to test cross-sectional associations between the urinary concentrations with several diseases and cancer. No associations were found between 2,4-DCP and prevalence of any disease. For thyroid cancer, there is evidence from a case–control study in China (Yang et al., 2021b), where urinary concentrations of 2,4-DCP were positively correlated with thyroid cancer and showed evidence of a dose–response relation.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *evidence suggesting lack of carcinogenicity* in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 2,4-dichlorophenol. 2,4-DCP has been tested in two long-term carcinogenesis studies by oral administration (in feed) to B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice and F344/N rats (NTP, 1989b) and in one study by oral administration (in drinking-water) to rats (Exon and Koller, 1985). There were no compound-related increases in the incidence of neoplastic lesions in rats or mice, and it was concluded that there was no evidence of carcinogenicity (NTP, 1989b). No additional studies on cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The absorption of 2,4-DCP is quite rapid when it is given orally, dermally, or by inhalation. Somani and Khalique (1982) reported that intravenously administered 2,4-DCP was distributed to the kidney, liver, fat, and brain of rats, with the highest concentration in the kidney. 2,4-DCP is metabolized to glucuronide and other conjugates. The parent compound and its conjugates were rapidly eliminated from the body. The half-lives of 2,4-DCP and its conjugates in plasma, fat, brain, liver, and kidney ranged from 4 to 30 minutes. The volume of distribution of 2,4-DCP in plasma was 3.7 L/kg. Tissue/plasma ratios indicated that 2,4-DCP has a greater affinity for kidney than for other major organs (Somani and Khalique, 1982).

A significant increase in the percentage of chromosome aberrations in bone-marrow and spermatocyte cells was observed after intraperitoneal injection of 2,4-DCP in Swiss mice (Amer and Aly, 2001). In cultured CHO cells, 2,4-DCP did not induce chromosomal aberrations but significantly increased the frequency of SCEs in both the presence and absence of metabolic activation (microsome S9) (NTP, 1989b). No mutagenicity of 2,4-DCP was observed in mouse L5178Y lymphoma cells without metabolic activation. Similarly, 2,4-DCP produced no increase in revertant colonies in *S. typhimurium* strains TA98, TA100, or TA1537 with or without exogenous metabolic activation, and equivocal results were observed in strain aTA1535 only in the presence of hamster S9 (NTP, 1989b). In non-mammalian species in contrast, mainly fishes, 2,4-DCP significantly induce DNA strand breaks (detected by neutral comet assay) in erythrocytes and hepatocytes of goldfish in a dose-dependent manner in numerous studies.

2,4-DCP increased ROS formation, lipid peroxidation, and oxidized proteins in human PBMCs (Bukowska et al., 2016). In rats receiving pre- and postnatal treatment with 2,4-DCP in drinking-water, the immune response was affected: cell-mediated immunity (measured as delayed-type hypersensitivity) was decreased, while humoral immunity was enhanced (increased serum antibody production) (Exon and Koller, 1985).

Exposure of H295R human adrenocortical carcinoma cells to 2,4-DCP resulted in lower production of estradiol and alterations in transcript expression of genes involved in steroidogenesis, including CYP (CYP11A, CYP17, CYP19A), 3 $\beta$ HSD, 17 $\beta$ HSD, and StAR (Ma et al., 2012). Recently, 2,4-DCP was reported to induce endocrine-disruptive effects in non-mammalian species, i.e. feminization in fish, by

disrupting the synthesis of sex hormones and downregulating male-related genes through DNA methylation (Yuan et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2020a; Hu et al., 2021a); induction of global DNA hypermethylation via altered *S*-adenosylmethionine (SAM) level and DNA methyltransferase-expression in fish (Zhang et al., 2014). Huang et al. (2018a) observed significant, dose-dependent oxidative stress (ROS) in fish after exposure to 2,4-DCP (Huang et al., 2018a). 2,4-DCP was considered to induce adverse effects in female sex organs through interruption of ER-mediated processes (Zhang et al., 2008).

### Summary

Findings from studies of cancer in humans are minimally informative for 2,4-DCP specifically. No carcinogenic effect was observed in mice and rats after oral treatment with 2,4-DCP. There is sparse evidence that 2,4-DCP exhibits KCs in experimental systems *in vivo* and *in vitro*, mainly from non-mammalian species. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2,4-dichlorophenol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 111 Alachlor (CAS No. 15972-60-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Alachlor has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Alachlor was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Alachlor is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). It is a chloroacetanilide herbicide used primarily on corn and soybeans. It was first registered for use in the USA in 1969 and, at its peak in the 1980s, was one of the most widely used agricultural pesticides (US EPA, 1998). It has been banned in Canada and the EU (European Commission, 2007a) but is still authorized in the USA and subject to consent for importing in many countries in Africa, Asia, and Central and South America (Rotterdam Convention, 2011a). Occupational exposure in pesticide applicators may occur either via the dermal or inhalational routes (Flaherty et al., 1995; Mahaboonpeeti et al., 2018). Wearing long-sleeved shirts and long pants can reduce dermal alachlor exposures by > 80% (Mahaboonpeeti et al., 2018). Alachlor is relatively non-persistent in the environment (Lewis et al., 2016).

### Cancer in humans

There are a few studies of cancer in humans for alachlor. In the most recent update of the US NCI Agricultural Health Study (AHS) cohort (Lerro et al., 2018b), there was a strong increased risk of laryngeal cancer and an imprecise elevation in myeloid leukaemia. There was no association with lymphohaematopoietic malignancies overall, nor NHL or its subtypes, although a previous AHS analysis had found suggestive evidence of elevated risk of multiple myeloma (Lee et al., 2004a), which did not persist in the updated analysis. Another AHS analysis suggested an elevated risk for NHL among alachlor users with asthma, but not among those without (Lee et al., 2004b). In the AGRICOH Consortium, there was no association between alachlor and NHL overall or any of its subtypes (Leon et al., 2019). In a pooled study of three population-based case-control studies of NHL conducted by the US NCI, there was no association with alachlor use overall, but there was a statistically significant risk elevation among those who applied both alachlor and the widely used herbicide atrazine (which also showed no risk when considered alone) (De Roos et al., 2003). An analysis of the North American Pooled Project (NAPP) found no association between alachlor and Hodgkin lymphoma (Latifovic et al., 2020). In an industry-conducted study of a small



cohort of workers in alachlor manufacture, there was no elevated risk of cancer mortality or incidence at any site compared with the general population, but there were only 29 cases of incident cancer in total (Acquavella et al., 2004). Healthy-worker biases were likely to be strong in this cohort (the all-cause SMR was 0.64).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In a 2-year oral study reviewed by the US EPA, a statistically significant increase in lung bronchiolar tumours was observed in female mice treated with alachlor by oral administration (US EPA, 1998). In a 2-year study in rats treated orally reviewed by the US EPA, statistically significant increases of malignant stomach tumours, follicular tumours of the thyroid (adenomas plus carcinomas), and nasal turbinate adenomas were observed in both sexes (US EPA, 1998). In another study in rats treated orally reviewed by the US EPA, statistically significant increases in thyroid cell adenoma in males, malignant stomach tumours in both sexes, and nasal adenocarcinoma in both sexes were observed. The increases of tumours observed in cancer bioassays of alachlor (nasal tumours, follicular tumours of the thyroid, stomach tumours, liver tumours) are consistent with those observed in similar studies with other structurally related chloroacetanilide herbicides (US EPA, 1998).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Alachlor belongs to the group of chloroacetanilide herbicides that display a consistent pattern of mutagenic activity (Dearfield et al., 1999). Alachlor metabolites form DNA adducts in vitro (Nelson and Ross, 1998). Genotoxicity and genomic instability studies in human primary cells and cell lines found elevated micronucleus frequency, SCEs, and chromosome aberrations (Ribas et al., 1996; Mattiuzzo et al., 2006). Alachlor induced oxidative stress in in vivo models, particularly in the same target tissues observed in cancer assays (nasal mucosa) (Burman et al., 2003).

### **Summary**

Evidence from studies of cancer in humans is mixed. Most studies of alachlor have focused on NHL and have not shown consistent associations, although some suggestions of increased risk have been found in certain populations (e.g. people with asthma) or along with co-exposures. One study reported strong associations with laryngeal cancer and myeloid leukaemia, but no other studies have evaluated these cancer sites. Carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats found increases of various tumours in both sexes. Mechanistic studies in different models reported that the agent exhibits KCs including electrophilicity, genotoxicity, and oxidative stress. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of alachlor to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **112 Ametryn (CAS No. 834-12-8)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Ametryn has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Ametryn, one of the triazine family of herbicides, is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). It is used for control of broadleaf weeds and annual grasses, and for general weed control on food crops (PubChem, 2024b). Recognized sources of exposure are dietary intake and drinking-water in the general population (US EPA, 2005); exposure levels may be elevated in (rural) areas that use recycled irrigation water (Msibi et al., 2023) or in close proximity

to agricultural land where ametryn is applied (de Queiroz et al., 2018). Occupational exposure is also documented (US EPA, 2005; Msibi et al., 2021), with relatively high levels of inhalation exposure reported even with use of personal protective equipment (Msibi et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in humans**

No epidemiological data on ametryn specifically or on cancer incidence or mortality were available to the Advisory Group. A 2011 review evaluated triazine herbicides and cancer and suggested a lack of evidence for a causal relationship between these pesticides and cancer (Sathiakumar et al., 2011). This review predominantly included studies that evaluated triazines overall, with no indication of use or proportion of use of ametryn. No other epidemiological studies on triazines overall and cancer were identified.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In an oral study in rats reviewed by US EPA (2005, 2018a), a significant increase in tumours in the testes, epididymis, and thyroid in males and both the liver and mammary gland in females were observed. However, these increases were observed only at the highest dose tested, with excessive systemic toxicity. No tumour formation was observed in a carcinogenicity study in mice up to the highest dose tested (US EPA, 2017a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Ametryn was reported to bind to DNA in vitro (Oliveira-Brett and da Silva, 2002) and to form micronuclei in vivo (Santos et al., 2015). It gave negative results in a series of regulatory genotoxicity studies in experimental systems (ECHA, 2024a). Ametryn has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay and was found to cause cells to significantly increase production of estradiol and progesterone, showing that it could modulate receptor-mediated effects (Karmaus et al., 2016; Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024). Ametryn was reported to alter cell proliferation in in vivo and in vitro cell models (Ohno et al., 1998; Dantas et al., 2015).

### **Summary**

No human cancer studies for ametryn were identified. One carcinogenicity oral study in rats exposed to ametryn reported increases of tumours in the testes, epididymis, and thyroid in males and both the liver and mammary gland in females. There is sparse mechanistic evidence suggesting that ametryn exhibits KCs. The Advisory Group noted that ametryn belongs to the triazine herbicides group (thiomethyl-*s*-triazines) and could be evaluated together with atrazine but considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ametryn is unwarranted at present on the basis of the available evidence.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **113 Atrazine (CAS No. 1912-24-9) and other 2-chloro-*s*-triazine herbicides**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Atrazine and simazine have previously both been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 73 (IARC, 1999b). Propazine has not previously been evaluated. Atrazine was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), based on human cancer and mechanistic evidence.

## Exposure characterization

Atrazine is a broad-spectrum chlorinated triazine herbicide that has agricultural uses for weed control in the cultivation of corn, soybean, sugarcane, and other crops and can also be used for weed control in recreational spaces and gardens (US EPA, 2018b). Atrazine was listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Although it has been banned in the EU since 2004 due to concerns about water contamination, it is still one of the most heavily used herbicides in North America, Africa, and the Asia–Pacific region (Jablonowski et al., 2011). It was also the second most commonly used active ingredient in conventional pesticides in the USA in 2012 (US EPA, 2017b). Atrazine and its metabolites can persist in water and soil for decades (Jablonowski et al., 2011). A study of pregnant women in France found that 5.3% had detectable urinary levels of atrazine and metabolites nearly 20 years after the EU ban (Chevrier et al., 2014). Atrazine has been detected in the urine of pesticide applicators in Croatia (Mendaš et al., 2012). In a study of families in the USA, urinary atrazine metabolites were above the limit of detection for 41% of farm fathers and 18% for non-farm fathers (Curwin et al., 2007), with lower prevalences for mothers and children. Levels of urinary atrazine are largely driven by recent exposure (Bakke et al., 2009).

Other 2-chloro-*s*-triazine herbicides are simazine (CAS No. 122-34-9) and propazine (CAS No. 139-40-2). Simazine is a high production volume chemical in the OECD (2007) list, but propazine is not.

## Cancer in humans

In the AHS cohort, the latest evaluation of atrazine showed suggestive associations with lung cancer (RR, 1.24; 95% CI, 1.04–1.46), aggressive prostate cancer (RR, 1.20; 95% CI, 0.95–1.52), and soft-tissue sarcoma (RR, 2.45; 95% CI, 0.97–2.54) (Remigio et al., 2024). Analyses focusing on lagged exposure reaffirmed a previously observed association with renal cell carcinoma (RR, 1.62; 95% CI, 1.15–2.29) and pharyngeal cancer (RR, 3.04; 95% CI, 1.45–6.36). There were suggestions of increased risk of NHL, but only in those diagnosed at younger ages. A pooled analysis of NHL that included the AHS and based on ever-exposure in the AGRICOH Consortium showed no evidence of an association with NHL (Leon et al., 2019).

An industry-conducted cohort study among triazine manufacturing workers found that the risk of death from any cancer, lung cancer or gastrointestinal cancer was not raised compared with the local population (MacLennan et al., 2003). The authors reported a sixfold excess of prostate cancer (SIR, [6.13]; 95% CI, [3.06–10.96]) in the original study; however, a nested case–control study within this cohort attributed this excess to screening (Hessel et al., 2004). This study is limited by potential healthy-worker biases. In a 2011 Canadian case–control study, the OR was 1.51 (95% CI, 0.64–3.35) based on nine exposed cases (Band et al., 2011). A pooled study of case–control studies in the USA demonstrated an OR of 1.6 (95% CI, 1.1–2.5) (De Roos et al., 2003) for NHL with atrazine use. Another study focusing on NHL subtypes with t(14;18) translocations showed an OR of 1.7 (95% CI, 1.0–2.8) for atrazine use (Schroeder et al., 2001). A cohort study of women found no association between atrazine levels in drinking-water and ovarian cancer (Inoue-Choi et al., 2016) and a population-based case–control study found no statistically significant association between atrazine use and epithelial ovarian cancer (Young et al., 2005).

For simazine, the Canadian case–control study found an elevated risk of prostate cancer (Band et al., 2011). No human cancer studies were identified for propazine.

## Cancer in experimental animals

When atrazine and simazine were evaluated in 1999 (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals for atrazine and *limited* evidence for simazine. However, the mechanism by which atrazine increased the incidence of mammary gland tumours in Sprague-Dawley rats was considered not relevant to humans. It is worth noting that use of the criteria in the latest *IARC Monographs* Preamble

(IARC, 2019b) could change the evaluation for atrazine in experimental animals. No long-term cancer bioassays published since the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation nor any bioassays for propazine were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Since the most recent *Monographs* evaluation, some studies have provided new insights into carcinogenic and genotoxic activity of atrazine. Atrazine is an endocrine disruptor with both estrogenic and anti-estrogenic properties, which could modulate receptor-mediated effects that could be related to the etiology of mammary, prostate, and ovarian cancer (Fan et al., 2007; Vandenberg et al., 2012; Huang et al., 2014). There is sparser evidence that other 2-chloro-*s*-triazine herbicides present similar endocrine-disruptive properties (Sanderson et al., 2001; Zorrilla et al., 2010).

Several studies have indicated that atrazine may be genotoxic, damaging the integrity of DNA and the stability of the cell genome in animal in vivo and in primary human cells in vitro (Singh et al., 2008; Cavas, 2011; Shang et al., 2022). Atrazine induced epigenetic changes in vivo and in human cell lines in vitro (Sánchez et al., 2020). Atrazine alters cell proliferation of primary human cell models (Manske et al., 2004; Liu et al., 2006). Atrazine was found to promote cell proliferation by activating the STAT3 signalling pathway in both RM1 prostate cancer cells in vitro and in the RM1 prostate cell xenograft mouse model in vivo (Hu et al., 2016b). Human liver cell lines treated with atrazine showed repression of *S100A4* gene expression, a biomarker of epithelial–mesenchymal transition, which is crucial for cancer metastasis, and inhibited TPA-induced cell motility, potentially disrupting cell homeostasis through an *S100A4*-dependent mechanism (Peyre et al., 2014). More recently, an investigation in a subcohort of AHS pesticide applicators observed an association between recent atrazine use and diminished kidney function (Shearer et al., 2021), supporting the biological plausibility of the observed association with renal cell carcinoma.

### **Summary**

There are both cohort and case–control studies of atrazine exposure and cancer risk, with positive, although not entirely consistent, findings for cancers of the prostate and kidney and NHL. When atrazine and simazine were evaluated in 1999 (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of atrazine and *limited* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of simazine. New mechanistic studies on atrazine in various models reported that it can be genotoxic, cause genomic instability, induce epigenetic changes, modulate receptor-mediated effects and alter cell proliferation. The Advisory Group considered a *Monographs* evaluation of atrazine to be warranted but considered that the evidence for propazine and simazine would be unlikely to lead to a new or revised classification at present.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **114 Pyrethrins and pyrethroids**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Pyrethrins and pyrethroids have previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 53 in 1990 (IARC, 1991).

“Some pyrethroids (e.g. permethrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin)” were given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer findings (for multiple myeloma and childhood leukaemia) and mechanistic evidence for some of the pesticides in this class. Pyrethrins are on the priority list for the JMPR.

## Exposure characterization

Pyrethroids are synthetic derivatives of natural pyrethrins from the plant *Chrysanthemum cinerariaefolium*. They comprise esters of chrysanthemic acid (2,2-dimethyl-3-(1-isobutenyl)cyclopropane-1-carboxylic acid) and halogenated derivatives of their acids and alcohols. They are used as insecticides worldwide in agricultural, veterinary, domestic, and public health applications. Of the 42 pyrethroid substances, deltamethrin, permethrin (agent 118) and  $\alpha$ -cypermethrin (agent) are commonly used (Chrustek et al., 2018). Other pyrethroids that have been studied include imiprothrin, bifenthrin (agent 115) and cyfluthrin (agent 116). Their public health uses include disinfection of buildings and aircraft and treatment of mosquito nets and army uniforms. Permethrin is also used in shampoo for treatment of head lice and scabies (IARC, 1991). Pyrethrins are also commonly used as insecticides in agricultural and home and garden use (Ensley, 2018). Exposure of the general population has been identified by detection of urinary metabolites of pyrethroids in inhabitants of residential areas (Schettgen et al., 2002).

## Cancer in humans

Results specific to permethrin are described in its own section (see agent 118). No human cancer studies of cypermethrin were available to the Advisory Group (see agent 117).

Pyrethroid insecticides as a class were evaluated in the AGRICOH Consortium. There was no association with NHL overall nor with any of its subtypes based on ever-use of the group (Leon et al., 2011). However, exposure to deltamethrin was associated with increased risk of small lymphocytic lymphoma/chronic lymphocytic leukaemia (SLL/CLL) (HR, 1.48; 95% CI, 1.06–2.07). Pyrethroid insecticides were evaluated in the Interlymph Consortium and showed no association with NHL overall or any subtype (De Roos et al., 2021).

In a case–control study of childhood acute lymphocytic leukaemia, higher levels of urinary metabolites of pyrethroid insecticides were associated with increased risk (OR, 2.75; 95% CI, 1.43–5.29) (Ding et al., 2012). In another case–control study of childhood acute leukaemia, there was an increased risk with use of insecticidal shampoos (not specific to pyrethroid insecticides, but pyrethroids are a major component of many insecticidal shampoos) (OR, 1.9; 95% CI, 1.2–3.3); in other analyses focused on shampoos with pyrethroid ingredients the OR was 2.0 (95% CI, 1.1–3.4) (Menegaux et al., 2006). A separate case–control study indicated no association with leukaemia (OR, 0.86, 95% CI, 0.61–1.20) among children whose residences were within 600 m of where pyrethroid insecticides, grouped as a class, were sprayed (Nguyen et al., 2023).

A case–control study of leukaemia among men reported increased risks in those applying natural pyrethrins (Brown et al., 1990). A case–control study in Spain indicated in principal components analysis that one component, including pyrethrin insecticides, accounted for an increased risk of CLL (Benavente et al., 2020).

Within the AHS, lung cancer mortality was increased among non-smokers who reported use of pyrethroids (Shrestha et al., 2022).

## Cancer in experimental animals

Since the previous IARC evaluation of *inadequate* evidence for the carcinogenicity of permethrin in experimental animals (IARC, 1991), increases in the incidence of bronchioloalveolar adenoma and carcinoma in female mice, and of hepatocellular adenoma in male and female mice, have been observed in one 2-year study in mice (oral administration) reviewed by the US EPA, and a high-dose study has shown an increased incidence of lung adenoma in female mice (US EPA, 2006a). In a 2-year oral study in mice exposed to imiprothrin, increased incidence of lung adenocarcinomas was observed in males, and females showed an increasing trend in the incidence of lung adenomas and combined lung adenoma/adenocarcinomas (Yamada et al., 2019). The US EPA reported increased incidence of benign lung

adenomas and adenomas plus carcinomas combined in females in a mouse carcinogenicity study of cypermethrin, while there was no evidence of tumours in rats (US EPA, 2023a). In a 1-year study in mice with chronic dermal exposure to cypermethrin, increased incidence of benign skin tumours was observed (Shukla et al., 2002). A combined chronic toxicity/carcinogenicity GLP study in rats administered cyfluthrin orally, reviewed by US EPA (2001), reported increases in mammary gland adenocarcinomas at the highest dose in females. Mammary adenocarcinomas were also reported in males treated by various routes, a rare finding in rats. Although these increases were not statistically significant, the incidence of mammary adenocarcinoma in both males and females was above historical control rates in rats.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Since the previous IARC evaluation, many mechanistic studies relevant to the KCs have become available for permethrin and other pyrethroids. Permethrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability, and DNA damage in animals and in primary human cells in vitro (Gabbianelli et al., 2004; Roma et al., 2012a; Navarrete-Meneses et al., 2017). Permethrin alters the modulation of receptor-mediated and endocrine effects in animals in vivo and cell line models in vitro (Go et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2004; Brander et al., 2012). Permethrin can induce cytotoxicity in vivo (Bath et al., 2009) and in human primary cells in vitro (Das et al., 2008, Roma et al., 2012b).

Cypermethrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability, and DNA damage in animals and in primary human cells in vitro (Gabbianelli et al., 2004; Vardavas et al., 2016; Mužinić et al., 2019). Cypermethrin promoted metastasis of lung cancer cells both in vitro and in animal models by inhibiting development of pro-inflammatory M1 macrophages (Huang et al., 2018b). Cypermethrin is an endocrine disruptor with ER activity and could facilitate cell proliferation (Zhang et al., 2021c). AR activity (Ding et al., 2020) and thyroid-receptor activity were also reported (Ha et al., 2021).  $\beta$ -Cypermethrin and the general pyrethroid metabolite 3-phenoxybenzoic acid induce cytotoxicity, block granulocytic cell differentiation (He et al., 2018a), and induce apoptosis in human neuroblastoma cell lines (Raszewski et al., 2016).

Cyfluthrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability and DNA damage in animals and in primary human cells in vitro (Ila et al., 2008; Calderón-Segura et al., 2018). Cyfluthrin induced cytotoxicity and oxidative stress in cell line models (Martínez et al., 2019). Cyfluthrin has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay and was one of the most potent estradiol steroidogens of all chemicals screened in this assay, showing that it could modulate receptor-mediated effects. (Karmaus et al., 2016; Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021)

### **Summary**

Human cancer studies suggest associations of pyrethrin and pyrethroid insecticides with leukaemia in children and, to a lesser extent, adults. Carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats exposed to some pyrethroids reported increases of various tumours in both sexes. Mechanistic studies on some pyrethroids in various models reported that these substances can be genotoxic, cause genomic instability, modulate receptor-mediated effects and alter cell proliferation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of pyrethrins and pyrethroids to be warranted, and recommended that this agent be evaluated in the same volume as other prioritized pyrethroids (see agents 115–118 in the present report).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 115 Bifenthrin (CAS No. 82657-04-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Bifenthrin has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Bifenthrin is on the priority list for the Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues (JMPR).

### Exposure characterization

Bifenthrin is a non-water-soluble insecticide used in consumer (i.e. home-use) and commercial products (PubChem, 2024c) and as an agricultural pesticide (FAO, 2022). Its water insolubility leads to accumulation in soil (half-life, 7 days to 8 months) (PubChem, 2024c). More than 600 bifenthrin-containing products are available in the USA (Johnson et al., 2010). It is part of the widely used pyrethroid-based pesticide group (Ravula and Yenugu, 2021) and is used against insects ranging from termites to agricultural pests, as well as mosquitoes, flies, and fleas. Beyond household and commercial use, it has been used in pesticide-treated clothing (Banks et al., 2014). In the EU it is not authorized either as a pesticide or biocide.

Bifenthrin has been quantified on household surfaces (Starr et al., 2018) and in air (Yoshida et al., 2021). It has been detected in food (reviewed in (Morgan et al., 2018; Morgan, 2020; Ravula and Yenugu, 2021), in breast milk (including samples above the tolerable daily intake (Anand et al., 2021), and in urine samples from the general population (Yoshida et al., 2021; Akyeampong et al., 2022) and workers such as bifenthrin applicators (Kongtip et al., 2013).

### Cancer in humans

A case–control study evaluating prenatal and early-childhood exposure (exposure estimated based on address at birth) observed no statistically significant association between bifenthrin and ALL or AML in children aged < 6 years (ALL: OR, 1.18; 95% CI, 0.82, 1.70; AML: OR, 1.20; 95% CI, 0.56, 2.58); the interpretation was unchanged when considering estimates adjusted for exposure to other pesticides (Park et al., 2020). A study on urinary levels of the general pyrethroid metabolite 3-phenoxybenzoic acid observed higher all-cause and cardiovascular mortality with higher metabolite levels, but no association with cancer mortality (Bao et al., 2020b). A second study on pyrethroid use in pesticide applicators observed higher risk of mortality from lung and bronchus cancers among non-smokers with ever use (Shrestha et al., 2022). These studies evaluated permethrin or general pyrethroid exposure and not a measure of bifenthrin directly and thus their informativeness may be limited.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Evidence was reported of mesenchymal tumours of the bladder (both epithelial and spindle cells) in mice exposed to bifenthrin at 0, 50, 200, 500, and 600 ppm (no observed adverse effect level (NOAEL) (50 ppm = 7.6 mg/kg bw per day). Tumours were observed in many of the animals, mainly in males (Butler et al., 1997). The findings have been dismissed by a follow-up re-evaluation, but details are not available (FAO, 2009). The FAO (2009) studies in mice revealed only benign tumours at high doses.

### Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic evidence on bifenthrin carcinogenicity derives mainly from studies in experimental systems *in vitro* and *in vivo*. No evidence of genotoxicity was reported in studies summarized in INCHEM and more recently in FAO reports (INCHEM, 1992; FAO, 2022).

Bifenthrin induces oxidative stress and alteration of inflammatory markers in human neuroblastoma and colorectal cancer cells (Bouaziz et al., 2020; Gargouri et al., 2020). Increased levels of IL1B protein in liver and kidney were observed in female mice; however, the increase of inflammatory markers was accompanied by liver toxicity (Pylak-Piwko and Nieradko-Iwanicka, 2021). In two other studies in mice, general immunotoxicity, including pro-inflammatory markers and peritoneal macrophages, was observed with

decrease of spleen weight and increase of cytokine levels in the spleen, serum, thymus and other tissues (Jin et al., 2014; Wang et al., 2017a).

Bifenthrin has been considered an endocrine disruptor and exhibits evidence of the key characteristic of modulating receptor-mediated effects in rodents *in vivo* and *in vitro* (Liu et al., 2011; Jin et al., 2013). It was shown to have estrogen-disrupting activity in breast cancer cells and tested positive for E-screen model enantiomer-dependent estrogenic activity (Montes-Grajales and Olivero-Verbel, 2020). It was shown to affect calcium ion homeostasis, but this is mostly linked to cytotoxicity effects (Chien et al., 2019). Goto and co-workers showed that bifenthrin has tumour-promoting activity in a cell transformation assay (Goto et al., 2004).

### Summary

Evidence regarding cancer in humans is sparse. The evidence of tumour formation in animals, reported in only one study in mice, has been considered negative. Bifenthrin exhibits limited mechanistic evidence of some of the KCs from studies in experimental systems, mainly *in vitro*. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of bifenthrin to be warranted, together with other pyrethrins and pyrethroids included in this report (see agents 114, 116–118 in the present report).

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 116 Cyfluthrin (CAS No. 68359-37-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Cyfluthrin has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Cyfluthrin is used as an agricultural and structural pesticide (PubChem, 2024d). The insecticide is part of the widely used pyrethroid-based pesticide group and is used against a range of insects (e.g. cockroaches, houseflies, mosquitoes, rape winter stem weevil, and aphids (Ravula and Yenugu, 2021)). Beyond household and commercial use, cyfluthrin has been used in pesticide-treated clothing (Banks et al., 2014). Cyfluthrin has been detected in household dust in homes with proximate application (Madrigal et al., 2023) and in carpet dust (Deziel et al., 2015). Detectable levels have been measured in urine (Dalsager et al., 2019; Faure et al., 2020; Norén et al., 2020), plasma (Channa et al., 2012), breast milk (Sereda et al., 2009), and meconium (Berton et al., 2014) in general populations.

### Cancer in humans

No studies on cancer in humans specifically associated with cyfluthrin were available to the Advisory Group. Studies evaluating cancer associated with pyrethroids more generally are described elsewhere in this report (see agent 114).

### Cancer in experimental animals

A combined chronic toxicity/carcinogenicity oral GLP study on cyfluthrin in rats reviewed by the US EPA (US EPA, 2001) reported increases in mammary gland adenocarcinomas at the highest dose in females. Mammary adenocarcinomas were also reported in male rats treated by various routes, a rare finding in rats. Although these increases were not statistically significant, the incidence of mammary adenocarcinoma in both males and females was above historical control rates.



### **Mechanistic evidence**

Many mechanistic studies relevant to the KCs are available for cyfluthrin and other pyrethroids. Cyfluthrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability and DNA damage in animals and primary human cells in vitro (Ila et al., 2008; Calderón-Segura et al., 2018). It induced cytotoxicity and oxidative stress in cell line models (Martínez et al., 2019). Cyfluthrin has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay and was one of the most potent estradiol steroidogens of all chemicals screened in this assay, showing that it could modulate receptor-mediated effects (Karmaus et al., 2016; Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024).

### **Summary**

There is no direct human cancer evidence on cyfluthrin, and indirect evidence from studies on pyrethroid or permethrin exposure may be of limited informativeness. One carcinogenicity study on rats exposed orally to cyfluthrin reported increases above the historical control rates of mammary adenocarcinoma in both sexes. There is evidence that cyfluthrin exhibits KCs in human primary cells and in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cyfluthrin to be warranted, together with other pyrethrins and pyrethroids included in this report (agents 114–118).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **117 Cypermethrin (CAS No. 52315-07-8)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Cypermethrin has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. “Some pyrethroids (e.g. permethrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin)” were given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a). For cypermethrin specifically, only mechanistic evidence was described. Cypermethrin is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### **Exposure characterization**

Cypermethrin is a synthetic pyrethroid insecticide. It is widely used in both agricultural and residential settings. It is found in many household ant and cockroach killers. The agent is approved in the EU until 2029, for use on crops only under specific risk mitigation measures.

The routes of exposure for cypermethrin are inhalation and skin contact. However, little information is available on the real level exposure of cypermethrin in biological samples, since biomarkers of exposure for cypermethrin are the metabolites 3-phenoxybenzoic acid (3-PBA), *cis*-3-(2,2-dichlorovinyl)-2,2-dimethylcyclopropane carboxylic acid (*cis*-DCCA), and *trans*-3-(2,2-dichlorovinyl)-2,2-dimethylcyclopropane carboxylic acid (*trans*-DCCA), which are generally metabolized by many other pyrethroids (Côté et al., 2014). Therefore, it cannot be assumed that the levels of quantified metabolites correspond only to cypermethrin exposure.

### **Cancer in humans**

There were no studies specifically of cypermethrin and cancer risk in humans. However, there are several studies that evaluated pyrethroid insecticides, including cypermethrin. These studies are summarized in the section on Pyrethrins and pyrethroids (see agent 114 in the present report).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

The US EPA reported the incidence of benign lung adenomas and adenomas plus carcinomas combined in female mice. No evidence was seen of tumours in rats (US EPA, 2023a). In a 1-year study in mice with

chronic dermal exposure to cypermethrin, increased incidence of benign skin tumours was observed (Shukla et al., 2002).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Cypermethrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability, and DNA damage in animals and in primary human cells in vitro (Gabbianelli et al., 2004; Vardavas et al., 2016; Mužinić et al., 2019). Cypermethrin promoted metastasis of lung cancer cells both in vitro and in vivo by inhibiting development of pro-inflammatory M1 macrophages (Huang et al., 2018b). Cypermethrin is an endocrine disruptor, with ER activity, and could facilitate cell proliferation (Zhang et al., 2021c). AR activity (Ding et al., 2020) and thyroid-receptor activity have also been reported (Ha et al., 2021).  $\beta$ -Cypermethrin and the general pyrethroid metabolite 3-PBA induce cytotoxicity, block granulocytic cell differentiation (He et al., 2018a), and induce apoptosis in human neuroblastoma cell lines (Raszewski et al., 2016).

### **Summary**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group. One carcinogenicity study in mice exposed dermally to cypermethrin reported increases of benign skin tumours and another study in mice exposed to cypermethrin reported increases of benign lung adenomas and adenomas plus carcinomas combined in females. Mechanistic studies on cypermethrin in various models reported that it exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, genomic instability, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cypermethrin to be warranted, together with other pyrethrins and pyrethroids included in this report (agents 114–118).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **118 Permethrin (CAS No. 52645-53-1)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Permethrin has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 53 (IARC, 1991). “Some pyrethroids (e.g. permethrin, cypermethrin, deltamethrin)” were given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer findings (for multiple myeloma and childhood leukaemia) and mechanistic evidence. Permethrin is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### **Exposure characterization**

Permethrin is a pyrethroid insecticide with widespread agricultural, residential, and commercial use. It is used in agriculture for insect and parasite control in both crop and livestock farming (US EPA, 2009a) and in residential settings for vector control, including fleas and ticks for dogs and medical treatment of lice and scabies. It is also used to impregnate clothing for outdoor use, including military (Kegel et al., 2014). The agent is not authorized in the EU. As a result of its various applications, exposure of workers and the general population is likely.

### **Cancer in humans**

Within the AHS cohort, permethrin has been linked to increased risk of multiple myeloma, a finding that has persisted through several updates of the cohort (Rusiecki et al., 2009; Alavanja et al., 2014a), with  $RR > 2.0$  for ever use and evidence of exposure-related response ( $P$  for trend, 0.002). Within a sub-study of the AHS, recent and long-term use of permethrin was also associated with monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance (MGUS), an obligate precursor of multiple myeloma (Hofmann et al., 2021). In the AGRICOH Consortium pooled analysis based on ever use, there was no association with NHL overall,

nor with multiple myeloma (Leon et al., 2019). The Interlymph pooled study of case–control studies found no association between permethrin exposure and NHL, but there were not enough exposed cases to evaluate multiple myeloma specifically (De Roos et al., 2021). This association was also not evaluated within the NAPP, because there were few exposed multiple myeloma cases (Presutti et al., 2016; Kachuri et al., 2020). A mortality study within the AHS also suggested increased risk of death from multiple myeloma overall and from lung cancer among never-smokers (Shrestha et al., 2022); previous analyses of lung cancer incidence had not identified such an association.

A case–control study of infant and childhood leukaemia conducted in Brazil found that prenatal exposure to permethrin was associated with ALL and AML (Ferreira et al., 2013). However, a case–control study of childhood leukaemia in California found no association between permethrin in house dust and ALL (Madriral et al., 2021). A more recent case–control study has suggested an increased risk of childhood leukaemia (OR, 1.49, 95% CI, 0.83–2.67) among children who lived within 600 m of where permethrin was being applied (Nguyen et al., 2023).

Other studies have evaluated pyrethroids more generally, and those studies are summarized in the section on pyrethrins and pyrethroids (see agent 114).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Since the previous IARC evaluation of *inadequate* evidence for the carcinogenicity of permethrin in experimental animals (IARC, 1991), increases in the incidence of bronchioloalveolar adenoma and carcinoma in female mice and of hepatocellular adenoma in male and female mice have been observed in one 2-year study of oral permethrin in mice reviewed by the US EPA, and a high-dose study has shown an increased incidence of lung adenoma in female mice (US EPA, 2006a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Since the previous IARC evaluation, many mechanistic studies relevant to the KCs have been published for permethrin and other pyrethroids. Permethrin can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability and DNA damage in animals and in primary human cells in vitro (Gabbianelli et al., 2004; Roma et al., 2012a; Navarrete-Meneses et al., 2017). In models in vivo and in vitro, permethrin modulates various receptor-mediated and endocrine effects (Go et al., 1999; Kim et al., 2004; Brander et al., 2012). Permethrin can induce cytotoxicity in animals in vivo and primary human cells in vitro (Das et al., 2008; Roma et al., 2012b).

### **Summary**

The human cancer evidence is relatively consistent with respect to the association between permethrin and multiple myeloma, although the evidence comes primarily from the AHS cohort, as the case–control studies have not had enough exposed cases for evaluation. Within the AHS cohort, there is a statistically significant increase in incidence with permethrin exposure, with evidence of exposure-related response. In addition, permethrin was associated with MGUS, an obligate precursor to multiple myeloma, and with mortality from multiple myeloma. There is also some evidence of a positive association with childhood leukaemia, although it is less consistent. Carcinogenicity studies in mice exposed to permethrin reported increases of various tumours in both sexes. There is some mechanistic evidence that permethrin in human primary cells and in various experimental systems in vivo and in vitro exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, genomic instability, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of permethrin to be warranted, together with other pyrethrins and pyrethroids included in this report (agents 114–117).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 119 Biphenyl (CAS No. 92-52-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Biphenyl has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Biphenyl was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of cancer bioassay and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Biphenyl is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Biphenyl is used in organic syntheses, dye carriers, food preservatives, as an intermediate in the production of polychlorinated biphenyls, and as a fungistat in the packaging of citrus fruits and in plant disease control. Because of its high thermal stability, biphenyl in a mixture with biphenyl oxide is used as a heat transfer fluid (ACGIH, 2005; Li et al., 2016c; NCBI, 2020). Biphenyl is naturally present in coal tar, crude oil, and natural gas (Li et al., 2016c).

Exposure to biphenyl can occur by inhalation, ingestion, and dermal absorption (ILO and WHO, 2006). The general population can be exposed to biphenyl through eating citrus fruits that have been wrapped in paper impregnated with biphenyl or if living near an industrial site where biphenyl is used or has been discarded. At these sites, biphenyl may be carried on dust particles. Workers can be exposed if working in an industry that produces biphenyl, including unintentionally as a by-product, or uses it (Australian Government, 2022).

### Cancer in humans

No studies on cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In two 2-year animal bioassays, dietary exposure to biphenyl was associated with increased incidence of urinary bladder tumours in male F344 rats (Umeda et al., 2002) and of liver tumours in female BDF<sub>1</sub> mice (Umeda et al., 2005). Earlier studies of dietary biphenyl in rats and mice did not provide clear evidence of carcinogenicity (Dow Chemical Co., 1953; Ambrose et al., 1960; NTIS, 1968; Imai et al., 1983; Shiraiwa et al., 1989).

### Mechanistic evidence

In the human liver, biphenyl is hydroxylated to hydroxybiphenyls (HBPs) (Benford et al., 1981). Powis et al. (1987) showed that the metabolite 4-hydroxybiphenyl (4-HBP) is conjugated with glucuronic acid and sulfate in human liver and kidney tissue slices. Sulfotransferase activity for 2-, 3-, and 4-HBP was detected in various human surgical tissue sample preparations (liver, intestinal mucosa, lung, kidney, bladder, and brain) incubated with one of the hydroxybiphenyl isomers, with the highest activity found in the liver (Pacifici et al., 1991). The genotoxicity of biphenyl has been summarized by Li et al. (2016c) and US EPA (2013b), which concluded that biphenyl and its metabolites may induce genotoxicity, but the overall results were inconsistent. Biphenyl has been reported to be mutagenic and clastogenic in some, but not all, in vitro assays. However, positive results were reported for DNA strand breaks in stomach, blood, liver, bone marrow, kidney, bladder, lung, and brain of mice administered single doses of 2000 mg biphenyl/kg (Sasaki et al., 1997a, 2002). Micronuclei were observed in primary human lymphocytes (US EPA, 2013b). Exposure to biphenyl in the diet for 2 years produced hyperplasia in the urinary bladder of rats (Umeda et al., 2002).

### Summary

No studies of human cancer related to biphenyl exposure were available. Recent studies have yielded evidence that biphenyl induces cancer in experimental animals. Some mechanistic evidence suggests that

biphenyl exhibits the KC of genotoxicity. However, some inconsistency was observed across results. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of biphenyl to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 120 Boscalid (CAS No. 188425-85-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Boscalid has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Boscalid is a broad-spectrum fungicide. It is a biphenyl amide and works by inhibiting succinate dehydrogenase. Because it is active against a wide range of fungi, it is used on a similarly wide range of crops. It is approved in the USA and EU. Boscalid and its metabolites were not detected in urine in a study of the general population in the USA (Hyland et al., 2019) but were detected in 3.9 to 36% of the general population in EU countries (Ottenbros et al., 2023). In South Africa, silicone wrist bands detected boscalid in 56% of study participants, more often in children than adults (Fuhrimann et al., 2022). However, in Belgium, silicone wristbands detected boscalid in only 7% of participants (Aerts et al., 2018).

### Cancer in humans

A case–control study of childhood leukaemia in the USA used data on pesticide use and residential history to model exposure to pesticides (Park et al., 2020) and found an association with boscalid in the single-pesticide model (OR, 1.81; 95% CI, 1.10–2.97), which was attenuated in the fully adjusted model (OR, 1.38; 95% CI, 0.78–2.43).

### Cancer in experimental animals

Boscalid was reported to induce a slight increase of thyroid follicular cell adenomas in a 2-year rodent study (EFSA, 2008).

### Mechanistic evidence

Genotoxicity studies using human peripheral blood lymphocytes showed that boscalid significantly increased micronucleus formation (Çayır et al., 2014). In line with the evidence that boscalid is a succinate dehydrogenase (SDH) inhibitor, boscalid was found to increase the level of mitochondrial superoxide in HepG2 cells and to induce apoptosis (d'Hose et al., 2021). Deficiency in the enzyme SDH has been linked to several tumours in experimental animals and in humans (Duarte-Hospital et al., 2023). Yanicostas et al. summarized the results of toxicity testing with zebrafish, showing the KCs, including oxidative stress and alteration of nutrient supply (Yanicostas and Soussi-Yanicostas, 2021). In addition, Wang et al. found that boscalid might directly induce oxidative stress and alter the activity of ATPase (Wang et al., 2020a). Exposure of *Daphnia magna* to boscalid for 48 hours led to clearly decreased levels of antioxidant enzymes and to lipid peroxidation (Aksakal, 2020). Boscalid induced CYP1A, CYP2B, and CYP3A mRNA and/or increased related activities in primary rat and human hepatocytes (Wiemann et al., 2023), but inhibited prostaglandin D2 synthesis in a concentration-dependent manner in SC5 mouse Sertoli cells (Kugathas et al., 2016). Boscalid induced strong transcriptional upregulation of genes associated with the immune response and encoding enzymes related to oxidative phosphorylation and metabolism, including CYP4c3 and CYP6a2 in the eastern honeybee *Apis cerana* (Hymenoptera) (Huang et al., 2023b). In addition, boscalid showed estrogenic activity in MCF-7 and T47D-KBluc cell lines (Jabłońska-Trypuć et al., 2023), and it has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of various cytochromes, including

CYP2E1, CYP1A1 and CYP1A2 among others notably induced by PAHs, and for mRNA expression of PPAR $\gamma$  (US EPA, 2024g).

### Summary

Only one study of cancer in humans is available, with relatively weak exposure assessment and substantial risk attenuation after adjustment for other pesticides. There is some evidence from one experimental animal cancer study showing that boscalid induces benign tumours. There is some evidence that boscalid exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, alterations in nutrient supply, and receptor-mediated effects, in experimental systems, and in one study in human primary cells. Based on this evidence, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of boscalid is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 121 Carbaryl (CAS No. 63-25-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Carbaryl (1-naphthyl-methylcarbamate) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Supplement 7 (IARC, 1987a). Carbaryl was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a) on the basis of findings of cancer in humans, cancer bioassays, and mechanistic evidence. Carbaryl is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### Exposure characterization

Carbaryl, an *N*-methyl carbamate insecticide, is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). In the EU, the use of carbaryl has not been authorized since 2006 (European Commission, 2007b). However, in the USA, carbaryl remains registered for both agricultural and residential uses, including for application to fruit, vegetables, grains, and lawn and garden care (US EPA, 2021). The general population may be exposed to carbaryl from spray drift in regions surrounding agricultural areas. Carbaryl has been detected in both surface water and food (Koshlukova and Reed, 2014). In water samples from both paddy and vegetable fields in Dhamrai Upazila, Bangladesh, carbaryl was the most common pesticide detected at 14.1 and 18.1  $\mu\text{g/L}$ , above the maximum acceptable level of 0.5  $\mu\text{g/L}$  (Chowdhury et al., 2012). A metabolite of carbaryl, 1-naphthol, has been reported in urine samples from the US general population (CDC, 2022c).

Workers are most likely to be exposed to carbaryl dermally or by inhalation during its manufacture, formulation, and application (Koshlukova and Reed, 2014). In a study of workers exposed to carbaryl in greenhouses, 24-hour cumulative 1-naphthol levels ranged from 4.8 to 65.1% of the proposed biological reference value of 32 nmol/kg bw in 24-hour urine (Bouchard et al., 2008).

### Cancer in humans

Several epidemiological studies have reported results on carbaryl and cancer. Within the Interlymph Consortium, a pooled analysis of population-based case–control studies, there was an increased risk of NHL overall based on exposure assigned by self-report or expert assessment. Most subtypes, with the exception of CLL, showed some evidence of increased risk (De Roos et al., 2021). In a separate pooled analysis of case–control studies in the NAPP, which do not overlap with those included in Interlymph, there was also an elevation of NHL based on self-reported exposure (Koutros et al., 2019). A separate analysis within the NAPP showed a statistically significant association with multiple myeloma (Presutti et al., 2016). There was no evidence of an association with NHL or any subtype in the AHS cohort (Alavanja et al., 2014a), nor within the AGRICOH Consortium (HR, 0.95, 95% CI, 0.83–1.10 for all NHL combined) (Leon et al., 2019),

the latter based on ever/never exposure. A few studies have reported increased risks for cancer at other sites, including a prostate cancer case–control study (Band et al., 2011), associations with central nervous system (CNS) tumours in the AGRICAN cohort (Piel et al., 2019a) and with cutaneous melanoma within the AHS (Mahajan et al., 2007). New analyses are expected from the AHS, including one on all cancers within the pesticide applicators, and another on associations within the spouses.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Mice and rats were fed diets containing carbaryl for 2 years at various concentrations in a GLP study. Carbaryl caused increases in the incidence of haemangioma or haemangiosarcoma (combined) and renal cell adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in male mice, and of haemangiosarcoma and hepatocellular adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in female mice (US EPA, 1993b). In another GLP study, carbaryl caused an increase in the incidence of bladder papilloma and carcinoma in male rats and female rats (INCHEM, 1996). However, tumours in rats were observed only at doses above the maximum tolerated dose.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) Scientific Report provides insights into the metabolism of carbaryl (EFSA, 2006a). Three main metabolic pathways were identified: arene oxide formation, hydrolysis to form 1-naphthol, and oxidation of the *N*-methyl moiety. Various metabolites were isolated from urine and faeces, with 1-naphthol being the predominant urinary metabolite. Other metabolites include dihydrodihydroxycarbaryl, 5-hydroxycarbaryl, and 4-hydroxycarbaryl. The Environmental Health Criteria monograph on carbaryl notes rapid absorption in the lungs and digestive tract, with metabolism via similar pathways across various mammalian species. Carbaryl and its metabolites are primarily excreted in urine, with some enterohepatic cycling. Under normal exposure conditions, carbaryl is unlikely to accumulate in animals.

Since the previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 1987a), new mechanistic evidence has been published on carbaryl, covering cytotoxic and genotoxic effects. Although carbaryl gave negative results in the Ames test, evidence from studies in vitro and in vivo indicates that carbaryl may have genotoxic effects (EFSA, 2006a). In an NTP study, a COMET assay in Sprague-Dawley rats in vivo revealed a positive result in blood samples (NTP, 2019b). Carbaryl induced SCE, chromatid gaps, chromosomal breaks, translocations, ring formation, and fragmentation in V79 Chinese hamster cells. An increased frequency of aneuploid and polyploid cells was also reported. Carbaryl was screened in ToxCast and gave positive results in assays for cell-cycle and DNA binding and estrogen agonism (US EPA, 2024h).

Ferruccio et al. (2017) investigated the molecular effects of carbaryl and solar radiation on human melanocytes. The findings indicated that carbaryl exposure induced oxidative stress, as evidenced by upregulation of antioxidant genes such as haemoxygenase-1 (HMOX1) and downregulation of microphthalmia-associated transcription factor (MITF), a key regulator of melanocytic activity. Additionally, both carbaryl and solar radiation triggered gene responses indicative of DNA damage and cell-cycle disruption. Combined exposure to carbaryl and solar radiation resulted in a more intense gene response, particularly affecting genes involved in cell-cycle regulation (CDKN1A), DNA repair (BRCA1/2), and apoptosis (MDM2), suggesting a synergistic effect between the two exposures. Flow cytometry assays revealed S-phase cell-cycle arrest, reduced levels of apoptosis, and faster induction of DNA lesions (cyclobutane pyrimidine dimers) in carbaryl-treated groups. Overall, the study suggests that carbaryl is genotoxic to human melanocytes, especially when combined with solar radiation. A study by Saquib et al. (2021) focused on cytotoxic and genotoxic effects of carbaryl in human (HUVEC) umbilical vein endothelial cells. Exposure to carbaryl led to significant proliferation inhibition, lysosomal fragility, increased intracellular ROS levels, DNA damage, and apoptotic cell death, suggesting that carbaryl, along with other

pesticides studied, may adversely affect endothelial cell functions, potentially impacting angiogenesis and vascular biology.

In a long-term study by Tsatsakis et al. (2019), rats were exposed to a mixture of chemicals, including carbaryl, at doses below the no observed adverse effect level (NOAEL). The results indicated genotoxic effects in female rats and dose-dependent cytotoxic effects across various tissues. Specifically, testes exhibited degenerative and cellularity disorders, liver hepatocytes showed decreased glycogen deposition, gastric cells displayed degenerative changes, and lung tissue presented increased inflammatory cell infiltration and enhanced phagocytic activity in alveolar macrophages.

Xia et al. (2005) examined the genotoxic effects of carbaryl exposure on spermatozoa in workers. Carbaryl exposure was associated with increased sperm DNA fragmentation and numerical chromosomal aberrations, particularly aneuploidy. The study indicated a potential link between carbaryl exposure and adverse reproductive outcomes. Several studies of the immunotoxic and carcinogenic effects of carbamate pesticides have particularly focused on their impact on the immune system. Dhouib et al. (2016) examined the transition from immunotoxicity to carcinogenicity caused by carbamate pesticides, emphasizing their detrimental effects on the immune system. Jorsaraei et al. (2014) explored immunotoxic effects of carbaryl, both in vivo and in vitro, shedding light on its potential harm to immune function. Li et al. (2015b) examined how carbamate pesticides induce apoptosis (cell death) in human T lymphocytes. Igarashi et al. (2006) investigated the influence of possible endocrine-disrupting chemicals, including carbamate pesticides, on the activation of NF- $\kappa$ B, a key regulator of immune responses. These studies collectively underscore the immunological risks associated with carbamate pesticide exposure, relevant to discussions regarding KC7.

Several studies explored the metabolism and effects of carbamate insecticides, particularly methiocarb and carbaryl, on liver enzymes and plasma levels in both rats and humans, as well as their influence on nuclear receptors such as pregnane X receptor (PXR), constitutive androstane receptor (CAR), PPAR $\alpha$ , estrogenic, and anti-androgenic activities (Klotz et al., 1997; Fujino et al., 2016; Tange et al., 2016). Carbamate insecticides inhibit estrogen and progesterone activity in human breast and endometrial cancer cells by, and persistent binding of these compounds to the aryl hydrocarbon receptor has been reported (Lemaire et al., 2006; Bohonowych and Denison, 2007). Li et al. (2014a) reported that carbamate pesticides, including carbaryl, induced apoptosis and necrosis in human NK cells in a time- and dose-dependent manner. The mechanism involved both the caspase-cascade and mitochondrial cytochrome c pathways.

## Summary

There are several studies of carbaryl exposures and NHL in humans. Two separate pooled studies of population-based case–control studies reported increased risks of NHL with carbaryl exposure, while the AHS cohort demonstrated no evidence, nor did a meta-analysis of three cohorts based on ever/never exposed classification. Single studies have reported suggestive associations with other sites. In experiments with mice and rats, carbaryl increased the incidence of tumours in several tissues, that, according to the criteria in the latest version of the *Monographs* Preamble, could support the evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence that carbaryl exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, immunosuppression, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation, cell death and nutrient supply. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of carbaryl to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years).



## 122 Chlordecone (CAS No. 143-50-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Chlordecone has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 (IARC, 1987a), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Chlordecone was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Chlordecone (also known as kepone), a stable and persistent organochlorine insecticide, was extensively used in the French West Indies, Martinique and Guadeloupe, on banana farms between 1973 and 1993. It has been banned globally, and since 2019 it has been listed in Annex A of the Stockholm Convention (Secretariat of the Stockholm Convention, 2009). However, due to its long-term presence in the environment, particularly in waterways and soil, and its capacity to accumulate in the food chain, there is still significant exposure to chlordecone in these regions (Dereumeaux et al., 2020).

Exposure occurs primarily through consuming locally produced foods including root vegetables, meat, and fish, resulting in widespread contamination among both animals and humans. Chlordecone has been measured in body fluids and tissues, including blood, fat, and milk (INSERM Collective Expertise Centre, 2022). In the “Kannari study: Health, Nutrition and Exposition to Chlordecone in French West Indies” (2013–2014), more than 90% of the general population showed some level of contamination, with a general declining trend (Dereumeaux et al., 2020). A recent study has also confirmed this decreasing pattern (El Balkhi and Saint-Marcoux, 2023).

### Cancer in humans

A population-based case–control study found a significant positive association between chlordecone concentration in blood and prostate cancer (Multigner et al., 2010). This finding was supported by a reanalysis conducted by Emeville et al. (2015). In addition, a study based on the data from the population-based Martinique Cancer Registry indicated that age-standardized incidence rates for prostate cancer increased by 5.07% annually between 1981 and 2005. However, an aggregate analysis of the same data revealed higher incidence rates of prostate cancer in urban areas with lower levels of soil contamination by chlordecone (Dieye et al., 2014). A cohort mortality study was conducted of banana plantation workers who were employed in polluted areas during the period of authorized chlordecone use from 1973 to 1993. Over a 15-year follow-up period (2000 to 2015), SMRs for cause-specific mortality were computed, comparing the mortality rates in the cohort with those of the general population of the polluted area. While significant excess deaths from stomach cancer were observed in women, no increase was observed for all-cancer mortality or mortality from prostate cancer (Luce et al., 2020). However, the limitations of using cancer-specific mortality data to investigate potential carcinogens, along with the presence of some level of exposure in the general population of the area that may potentially distort SMR results, should be considered. Another cohort study in the region, the Timoun mother–child cohort study in Guadeloupe, focused on the risk of congenital anomalies and early-life development (Costet et al., 2022), but has not yet reported on cancer outcomes.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1979b, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of chlordecone.

### Mechanistic evidence

DNA damage by chlordecone was observed in isolated human and rat testis cells (Bjørge et al., 1996b), but not in Ames tests (Schoeny et al., 1979; Legeay et al., 2018). Epigenetic effects induced by chlordecone exposure in utero on human male cord blood included a global reduction in H3K9me3, which correlated with decreased methylation in LINE-1 promoters and telomere length extension. The expression of genes linked to immune response, the cell cycle, DNA repair, and chromatin organization (genomic instability) was affected in human cord blood (Legoff et al., 2021a). Epigenetic effects were found in prostate and ovarian tissues of mice (Legoff et al., 2019, 2021b).

Chlordecone is an agonist of ER  $\alpha$  in vitro (Lemaire et al., 2006). In the 2019 Advisory Group report, studies of the estrogenic properties of chlordecone in vitro were cited (IARC, 2019a). Only one study in exposed humans was cited, in which there were no associations between serum concentrations of various hormones and the level of exposure to chlordecone (Emeville et al., 2013). Since then, new mechanistic studies in exposed humans have become available. Ayhan et al. (2021) investigated the consequences of prenatal exposure to chlordecone on pregnancy and child development at the age of 7 years (Ayhan et al., 2021). They observed a non-monotonic (inverted-U) association between exposure to chlordecone in utero, assessed by concentrations in cord blood, and thyroid-stimulating hormone (TSH) levels in girls and dehydroepiandrosterone, total testosterone, and dihydrotestosterone levels in both boys and girls. Only the third quartile of exposure in utero was associated with significantly increased hormone levels (Ayhan et al., 2021). The same group also found that cord-blood concentrations of chlordecone were monotonically associated with increased TSH levels at 3 months of age in boys only, without modification of free thyroxine (T4) or triiodothyronine (T3) levels (Cordier et al., 2015). Modulatory hormone-related effects of chlordecone in experimental models in vivo have been reported (Das et al., 1998; Lian et al., 2020; Yang et al., 2020b).

In human umbilical vein endothelial cells (HUVECs), chlordecone increases oxidative species and has pro-angiogenic properties (increased VEGF, capillary length, cell proliferation) (Alabed Alibrahim et al., 2018; Legeay et al., 2018; Clere et al., 2012). The angiogenic process is mediated by activation of ER  $\alpha$  in vivo (Clere et al., 2012).

### Summary

There is new evidence from epidemiological studies of cancer in humans associated with chlordecone exposure. There is already *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Mechanistic data in exposed humans show that chlordecone is probably an endocrine disruptor, modulating receptor-mediated effects, and can exert wide epigenetic effects. These results are supported by studies in experimental systems. In primary human cells, chlordecone can promote cell proliferation and angiogenesis. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of re-evaluation of chlordecone to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years).

## 123 Chlorpyrifos (CAS No. 2921-88-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Chlorpyrifos has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Chlorpyrifos was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer and mechanistic evidence. Chlorpyrifos is on the priority list for the JMPR.

## Exposure characterization

Chlorpyrifos is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Chlorpyrifos is an organophosphate insecticide, acaricide, and miticide used to control foliage and soil-borne insect pests on a variety of food and feed crops. It is currently still registered for use in the USA (US EPA, 2006b), although use has declined as particular registrations have been cancelled. The European Commission voted to cancel all registrations as of January 2020 (European Commission, 2020a). It was used in the past in many countries for both agricultural and residential applications.

Adults and children in the general population are exposed to chlorpyrifos through consumption of water and food (Bradman et al., 2007; El-Nahhal and Lubbad, 2018). Workers could be exposed to chlorpyrifos through direct transdermal contact and by inhalation during its manufacture, preparation of spraying solutions, loading of sprayer tanks, and application (EFSA, 2019). In low-income countries, exposure to chlorpyrifos can be very high. 3,5,6-Trichloro-2-pyridinol, a chlorpyrifos-specific metabolite, was analysed in urine specimens collected from agricultural workers in Egypt. Concentrations were 6437 µg/g creatinine in sprayers, 184 µg/g in technicians and 157 µg/g in engineers (Farahat et al., 2011).

## Cancer in humans

In the NAPP, which includes population-based case–control studies, there was a positive association, but not statistically significant, between ever-use of chlorpyrifos and NHL overall (Koutros et al., 2019). In the Interlymph Consortium, a pooling project of case–control studies not included in the NAPP, there was no apparent association between NHL overall or any subtypes, including with increased duration of use (De Roos et al., 2021). Within the AHS cohort, there have been several evaluations of chlorpyrifos. The most recent publication reported no apparent association with NHL overall; however, there was a suggestion of increased risk of follicular lymphoma with increasing use of chlorpyrifos (Alavanja et al., 2014b). In the AGRICOH Consortium, there was no association of ever use of chlorpyrifos with NHL overall or any of the subtypes (Leon et al., 2019). An analysis of chlorpyrifos and multiple cancer sites within the AHS suggested increased risk of brain cancer and leukaemia (Lee et al., 2004). Among spouses in the AHS, breast cancer risk was elevated among women who ever used chlorpyrifos, primarily in premenopausal women (Engel et al., 2017). A case–control study of postmenopausal breast cancer also demonstrated increased risk among women with estimated occupational and residential chlorpyrifos exposure (Tayour et al., 2019).

## Cancer in experimental animals

Yano et al. (2000) evaluated the carcinogenicity of chlorpyrifos in a high-dose, 2-year dietary toxicity study in Fischer 344 rats. Chlorpyrifos administered daily in the feed according to US EPA guidelines was not found to be carcinogenic.

## Mechanistic evidence

Chlorpyrifos has been generally considered not to be a genotoxic agent. The available studies do not support a concern about mutagenicity; neither gene mutation nor clastogenic effects have been reported for chlorpyrifos (EFSA, 2019; Wolejko et al., 2022). Studies using high doses showed mutagenic results (Sandhu et al., 2013), whereas lower exposures did not. However, several studies on DNA damage in human lymphocytes in vitro and in vivo have shown positive findings (Rahman et al., 2002; Vindas et al., 2004; Ojha and Srivastava, 2014; Ezzi et al., 2016; Zeljezic et al., 2017), and one recent study observed chromosome loss and mis-segregation (Mužinić et al., 2019).

Chlorpyrifos has significant ER and AR activity in high-throughput screening assays (Andersen et al., 2002). In the steroidogenesis assay, at high test concentrations, chlorpyrifos increased estradiol levels and decreased testosterone levels. However, effects seen in vitro were not supported by data on higher mammals

from the uterotrophic assay, the Hershberger assay, and pubertal hormone assays in boys and girls (Kang et al., 2004; US EPA, 2011a; Medithi et al., 2022a).

Chlorpyrifos induces cytotoxicity in human glioblastoma cells through oxidative stress-related apoptosis (Hsu et al., 2023). These authors observed decreased cell viability, morphological changes, and increased production of ROS. Additionally, chlorpyrifos upregulated pro-apoptotic proteins (Bax and cleaved caspases), while downregulating anti-apoptotic protein Bcl-2. Moreover, chlorpyrifos modulated antioxidant response pathways. Importantly, vitamin E ameliorated the cytotoxic effects of chlorpyrifos, suggesting oxidative stress as a critical mechanism in chlorpyrifos-associated glioblastoma.

In studies related to neurotoxicity, Parween et al. (2022) found that chlorpyrifos induces oxidative stress, cytotoxicity, and downregulation of paraoxonase 2 (PON2) expression in human neuroblastoma cells. Combined exposure to pyridostigmine bromide, chlorpyrifos, and *N,N*-diethyl-*meta*-toluamide (DEET) led to profound mitochondrial dysfunction in neuroblastoma cells, although without a significant increase in ROS production (Delic et al., 2021). Moyano et al. (2020) demonstrated that chlorpyrifos promoted cell proliferation in breast cancer cells through estrogen and aryl hydrocarbon receptors, suggesting multiple mechanisms of carcinogenicity. Chlorpyrifos disrupted cholinergic and Wnt/ $\beta$ -catenin signalling pathways, upregulated acetylcholinesterase-R, and induced oxidative stress, contributing to increased cell proliferation (Moyano et al., 2021).

### Summary

Although there are a few suggestive associations, the human cancer evidence for chlorpyrifos is inconclusive. Two pooled case–control studies have examined NHL, one showing some suggestive evidence and one showing no evidence of an association. The large prospective AHS cohort showed no association with NHL overall, but a suggestive association with one of its subtypes. An update of the AHS evaluating multiple cancer sites with chlorpyrifos is expected within a couple of years. A case–control and a cohort study suggested an association between chlorpyrifos and breast cancer in women, of particular interest given its estrogenic properties. There is a lack of evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

Mechanistic evidence suggests that chlorpyrifos exhibits KCs, including oxidative stress, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation and cell death in experimental systems and some evidence in exposed humans. The mechanistic evidence would support an evaluation of the carcinogenicity of chlorpyrifos. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of chlorpyrifos to be warranted, together with other organophosphates included in this report (fonofos, agent 124; malathion, agent 131; terbufos, agent 127).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 124 Fonofos (CAS No. 944-2-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Fonofos has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Fonofos was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Fonofos is an organothiophosphate soil insecticide used on a variety of agricultural crops (e.g. cereals, maize, vegetables, and fruit). In 1997, its registration in the USA was cancelled (US EPA, 1999) and it is no longer approved for use in the EU (European Commission, n.d). While regulatory information is difficult to find in other parts of the world, there is some evidence that fonofos is still being used in LMICs. For example, in a study of pesticide residues on fruits and vegetables in Uganda sold for human consumption, fonofos was

detected in 29% of samples (Ssemugabo et al., 2022). In the US AHS, around 20% of the included licensed pesticide applicators were ever exposed to fonofos (Mahajan et al., 2006).

### **Cancer in humans**

Within the AHS cohort, there was a statistically significant association between fonofos use and aggressive prostate cancer (Koutros et al., 2013). A recent publication from the AHS showed a significant interaction between use of fonofos and a polygenic risk score (PRS) on prostate cancer risk, with men who used fonofos and had a higher PRS having increased risk of prostate cancer overall, which was greater among those with aggressive disease (Hurwitz et al., 2023). Within the AHS, there was no association between fonofos and NHL overall, although there was a suggestive exposure–response relation with multiple myeloma (Alavanja et al., 2014a) and evidence of an association with leukaemia (Mahajan et al., 2006). In the NAPP pooled analysis of US and Canadian population-based case–control studies, there was a statistically significant elevation of NHL overall based on self-reported use of fonofos, with the strongest associations observed for follicular lymphoma and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (Koutros et al., 2019).

Among spouses of the AHS pesticide applicators, no association was observed with breast cancer for personal use of fonofos (Lerro et al., 2015), but among women who did not apply pesticides, their husband's use was associated with elevated risk (Engel et al., 2017).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report (IARC, 2019a), results of chronic cancer rodent bioassays were found to be equivocal by the US EPA (US EPA, 2008a). In a report reviewed by the US EPA, male and female Sprague-Dawley rats fed fonofos in the diet for 24 months had cortical cell adenoma and phaeochromocytoma of the adrenal gland, hepatocellular adenoma, mammary gland carcinoma and adenoma, tumours of the thyroid, pituitary gland carcinoma and adenoma in males, hepatocellular adenoma and carcinoma, tumours of the pituitary gland in both males and females, and HCC in males (US EPA, 1991). However, these tumours were also reported in the control group and there was no significant difference in the incidence of tumours between the control and treated groups at any dose. In male CD-1 mice administered fonofos in diet for 18 months, no differences in the incidence of tumours at any dose compared with controls in either males or females were reported (US EPA, 1996a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Furnes and Schlenk (2005) explored the metabolism of fonofos, highlighting its extrahepatic metabolism by flavin-containing monooxygenase (FMO) and CYP enzymes. The study demonstrated that FMO1 plays a significant role in the sulfoxidation of fonofos and other pesticides. This suggested that fonofos may undergo metabolic transformations outside the liver, expanding understanding of its biotransformation pathways. Moreover, Smyser and Hodgson (1985) provided insights into the oxidative desulfuration of fonofos by pig liver microsomal FAD-containing monooxygenase. The study revealed that fonofos acts as a substrate for this enzyme, indicating phosphorus-oxidase activity. The formation of phosphine oxide as the major metabolite underscored the role of microsomal FAD-containing monooxygenase in fonofos metabolism, with implications for its overall biological effects.

Fonofos has been implicated in various mechanistic pathways associated with potential carcinogenicity. Fonofos tested positive in mutagenicity studies, such as Ames assay, and in *S. cerevisiae* (Gentile et al., 1982). Zhang et al. (2012b) investigated the epigenetic effects of fonofos, along with parathion and terbufos, on the human haematopoietic K562 cell line and found that exposure to these pesticides induced DNA methylation alterations in the promoter regions of 712 genes. Notably, fonofos, parathion, and terbufos clustered together based on their methylation patterns, indicating similar effects. Functional analysis revealed the involvement of these methylation changes in processes related to carcinogenesis, providing experimental evidence that

pesticides, including fonofos, may modify gene promoter DNA methylation levels. This suggests a potential role for epigenetic mechanisms in pesticide-induced carcinogenesis.

There is evidence that fonofos exhibits the KC “modulates receptor-mediated effects”, as Hurwitz et al. (2023) suggested the interaction between fonofos and individual genetic variants occurring in regions associated with variants related to altered AR-driven transcriptional programmes relevant to prostate cancer. In addition, it was reported to alter steroid hormone metabolism (E2) and to inhibit testosterone activity in acellular models of human liver microsomes (Usmani et al., 2003, 2006). Fonofos was reported to induce hyperplasia in the duodenum in an 18-month carcinogenicity study in mice (US EPA, 1996a). Data are also available from the ToxCast and Tox21 programmes.

### Summary

There is evidence of human carcinogenicity that may support an evaluation for fonofos. Many epidemiological studies, including those from a large prospective cohort, have been conducted, with the strongest evidence noted for aggressive prostate cancer. Some positive associations with fonofos exposure were found for NHL (including subtypes) and breast cancer. Long-term bioassays in rats and mice fed fonofos in the diet did not show any significant differences in tumour incidence from the control group. Hence, the evidence from experimental animals is considered equivocal. Fonofos appears to exhibit KCs, including “alters DNA repair”, “induces epigenetic alterations”, and “modulates receptor-mediated effects”. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of fonofos to be warranted, together with other organophosphates included in this report (chlorpyrifos, agent 123; malathion, agent 131; terbufos, agent 127).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 125 Glyphosate (CAS No. 1071-83-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Glyphosate was previously evaluated in 2015 by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in Volume 112 (IARC, 2017a). The basis of this evaluation was *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (for NHL) and *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals, supported by *strong* mechanistic evidence for genotoxicity and oxidative stress. Glyphosate was given a priority rating of *no priority* for re-evaluation by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Glyphosate is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Glyphosate has been for decades one of the most heavily used herbicides globally. Its use was recently reauthorized by the European Commission until 2033 (EUR-Lex, 2023). For the 2015 evaluation, IARC evaluated both “pure” glyphosate and formulations containing glyphosate (IARC 2016). Formulations can vary and may contain glyphosate as the isopropylamine, ammonium, or sodium salt. Additives such as surfactants and impurities such as formaldehyde *N*-nitrosoglyphosate may be present in various concentrations (IARC, 2016).

In recent years, several studies have been conducted worldwide on exposure of the general population, as well as workers, to glyphosate or its main metabolite aminomethylphosphonic acid (AMPA). The National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey (NHANES) in the USA found detectable levels of glyphosate in 81% of the US population aged  $\geq 6$  years in 2013–2014, with a median (interquartile range) urine concentration of 0.450 (0.266–0.753)  $\mu\text{g/g}$  creatinine (Ospina et al., 2022). Some determinants of exposure in the general population include age (with exposures higher among young children in some

studies), diet, and proximity to spraying fields or to open water sources of drinking-water (e.g. Ospina et al., 2022; Berni et al., 2023; Lucia et al., 2023; Liu et al., 2024). A study of children in Japan found an increase in urinary concentrations between 2006 and 2015 (Nomura et al., 2022). Additional studies have recently reported on occupational exposure in a variety of jobs, including those involving direct handling of glyphosate (Boulanger et al., 2023; Dou et al., 2023; Hyland et al., 2024).

### Cancer in humans

Since the last evaluation, several studies have examined various cancer outcomes, mainly NHL. Hardell et al. (2023) pooled three Swedish case–control studies of NHL and hairy-cell leukaemia (all of which had been considered in the previous IARC evaluation). Among the few exposed cases ( $n = 37$ ) and controls (26), ORs of 2.0 (95% CI, 0.96–4.3) and 2.4 (95% CI, 1.2–5.0) were seen with  $\leq 13$  and  $> 13$  days (respectively) of reported exposure to glyphosate relative to no exposure. A pattern of higher risk with increased latency was observed, but no adjustment was made for exposure to other pesticides.

Increasing attention has focused on risks for subtypes of NHL. In a publication from the AHS that included exposure–response analyses of intensity-weighted lifetime days, there was no association with NHL overall, nor with any subtype in unlagged and lagged analyses (Andreotti et al., 2018). However, in a pooled study of three cohorts, including the AHS, and studies from France and Norway (AGRICOH), a positive association was seen between ever-exposure to glyphosate and diffuse large B-cell lymphoma (DLBCL) (HR, 1.36; 95% CI, 1.00–1.85). (Leon et al., 2019). Elevation was seen only in the Norwegian cohort, although the formal test for heterogeneity was null. For all other subtypes of NHL, the point estimates were below unity (but imprecise) and the HR for NHL overall was 0.95 (95% CI, 0.77–1.33). In the NAPP case–control study, positive associations were observed for handling glyphosate  $> 2$  days per year for NHL overall and for DLBCL (OR, 2.14; 95% CI, 1.07–4.28;  $P$  for trend, 0.2), but not for duration or overall use (Pahwa et al., 2019). By contrast, no association was seen between glyphosate and DLBCL in the Interlymph pooled case–control study (De Roos et al., 2022), either overall or by exposure duration. A meta-analysis, which found a positive meta-relative risk (meta-RR) for DLBCL (meta-RR, 1.29; 95% CI, 1.02–1.63) but not for NHL overall (meta-RR, 1.05; 95% CI, 0.90–1.24), did not include the recent findings from Interlymph (Boffetta et al., 2021).

Regarding other subtypes of NHL, findings have been mostly null. Exceptions include some evidence of positive associations between SLL and some, but not other, metrics in the NAPP (Pahwa et al., 2019). Positive associations observed in Interlymph for follicular lymphoma using a 10-year lag (OR, 1.48; 95% CI, 0.98–2.25) were robust to multiple sensitivity analyses (De Roos et al., 2022). Positive associations were also observed for follicular lymphoma in a recent case–control study in six centres in Italy (Meloni et al., 2021). No other studies have suggested associations with other NHL subtypes (Andreotti et al., 2018; Pahwa et al., 2019; Leon et al., 2019). In the most recent AHS analysis, there was an increased risk of AML; among applicators in the highest exposure quartile, there was an increased risk of AML compared with never-users (RR, 2.44; 95% CI, 0.94 to 6.32,  $P$  for trend, 0.11) in unlagged analyses, which became statistically significant in lagged analyses (Andreotti et al., 2018).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 2017a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of glyphosate, on the basis of studies in rodents: positive trends of renal tubule carcinoma and of renal tubule adenoma or carcinoma (combined) and haemangiosarcoma in CD-1 mice after dietary exposure (US EPA, 1985a, b, 1986a; Chandra and Frith, 1994; JMPR, 2006). Glyphosate induced adenomas and exerted tumour-promoting activity in several studies in rodents, including a transgenic mouse model for a *MYC* mutation in germinal B cells (George et al., 2010; Wang et al., 2019a).

## Mechanistic evidence

Glyphosate is mostly absorbed through the skin and via oral or pulmonary routes: it has been calculated that approximately 2% of glyphosate can penetrate skin. It accumulates in the kidneys, liver, colon, and small intestine and is excreted in the faeces (90%) and urine (JMPR, 2006; EFSA, 2015a). Since the previous evaluation, several studies have looked for effects linked to the KCs in multiple test systems. There is mounting evidence from studies in human cells *in vitro* and in experimental systems for effects on various KCs. The most recent evidence in exposed humans is summarized below.

One study identified an increase of genotoxicity-associated end-points in exposed humans. Balderrama-Carmona et al. (2020) reported a significant increase of micronucleus formation in agricultural workers from the Valle del Mayo area (Sonora, Mexico). However, the study lacked a proper exposure assessment. Several studies have confirmed previous findings and shown that glyphosate, its metabolite AMPA, and a common formulation induce single-strand breaks in human lymphocytes and PBMCs and at higher concentrations also double strand breaks, which might be repaired after 2 hours except with the formulation (Kwiatkowska et al., 2017; Suárez-Larios et al., 2017; Santovito et al., 2018; Woźniak et al., 2018).

Several studies of exposed humans have found evidence of oxidative stress, including oxidative DNA damage. In a longitudinal pre-post study performed among maize farmers, Sidthilaw et al. (2022) observed in 180 study participants an association of increased levels of urinary glyphosate with serum levels of malondialdehyde (MDA) and decreased serum levels of GSH. Recently, Chang et al. (2023b) identified a positive association between exposure to glyphosate and oxidative damage to DNA in a subcohort of male farmers of the AHS prospective cohort of pesticide applicators in Iowa and North Carolina. Specifically, urinary glyphosate concentration correlated positively with 8-OHdG and MDA (pre- and post-exposure). Also, farmers with high glyphosate exposure in the past year, or with lifetime glyphosate exposure, showed elevated 8-iso-prostaglandin F2 $\alpha$  levels compared with controls. Alterations in antioxidant defence mechanisms, i.e. GSH metabolism, by metabolomic analysis, were observed in serum samples of workers from three glyphosate manufacturing facilities in China when compared with control participants (general population) (Zhang et al., 2022b). Makris et al. (2022) identified an increase in markers of oxidative DNA damage but not of lipid peroxidation in a group of 177 children aged 10–11 years from a study in Cyprus (within the HBM4EU project). 8-OHdG was positively associated with the level of the glyphosate metabolite AMPA only.

Glyphosate exposure has been linked to inflammatory effects. In the study by Sidthilaw et al. (2022), participants were tested for lung function parameters: forced expiratory volume in 1 second (FEV1), forced vital capacity (FVC), FEV1/FVC, peak expiratory flow (PEF), and forced expiratory flow 25–75% (FEF25–75%). Glyphosate exposure was associated with decreases in FEV1, FVC, FEV1/FVC, PEF, and FEF25–75%. These results were similar to other epidemiological findings in the Republic of Korea (Cha et al., 2012) and Thailand (Sapbamrer et al., 2020). These findings are concordant with the observation that glyphosate induces inflammatory response in lung and other tissues *in vitro* and *in vivo* (Hernández et al., 2008; Kumar et al., 2014; Hao et al., 2019).

There is evidence for receptor-mediated effects in exposed humans. In the 2013–2014 NHANES study mentioned above, the relation between increased urinary levels of glyphosate and blood sex hormone levels (total testosterone, total estradiol, and sex hormone binding globulin (SHBG)) was assessed in 2130 persons. Urinary concentrations of glyphosate were inversely correlated with total estradiol levels and testosterone but not SHBG. The ratios of total testosterone:SHBG and total estradiol:SHBG (representing the fraction of active sex hormones in the blood) were significantly inversely correlated with urinary concentrations of glyphosate (Geier and Geier, 2023). Association of urinary glyphosate with methylation in promoter regions of MSH4, KCNA6, ABAT, and NDUFAF2/ERCC8 ageing genes and of the glyphosate metabolite AMPA with estrogen receptor 1 (ESR1) promoter hypomethylation, was observed in an epigenome-wide



association study conducted on leukocytes from a cohort of 392 postmenopausal women (Lucia et al., 2023). ER mediation of the effects of glyphosate was recently described in human PBMCs obtained from healthy donors, in which a reduction of Th1/Th2 ratio of T-helper (Th) cells was observed along with increased production of IL-4 and IL-17A and reduction of IFN $\gamma$ . The effects of glyphosate on IL-4 and IFN $\gamma$  were abolished by inhibition of the nuclear estrogen receptors ER $\alpha$ /ER $\beta$ , thus linking the modulation of receptor-mediated effects and the potential immunosuppressive effect of glyphosate (Maddalon et al., 2022).

Acute exposure to glyphosate induced a significant increase in serum levels of T4 hormone in a study in farmers pre- and post-spraying activity (Kongtip et al., 2021). Effects on endocrine systems have been confirmed in a pilot study conducted in 94 mother–infant pairs (45 female and 49 male) from The Infant Development and the Environment Study (TIDES) in the USA. Anogenital distance (AGD) as a marker of the “prenatal hormone milieu” was measured in male and female infants. Urinary levels of glyphosate and its metabolite AMPA were associated with specific AGDs in female infants but not males (Lesseur et al., 2021).

### Summary

The findings regarding associations between glyphosate and NHL in humans remain inconsistent, although more recent studies have focused on NHL subtypes. The Advisory Group concluded that it is unlikely that an evaluation of the human cancer evidence since the 2015 evaluation would result in a change in classification. The evidence for cancer in experimental animals was *sufficient* in 2015. Increasing mechanistic evidence that glyphosate exhibits various KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, immunosuppression, and modulation of receptor-mediated effects in exposed humans has become available since the previous evaluation. This is supported by mounting evidence in human cells in vitro and in experimental systems. However, several of the new studies in exposed humans were considered of limited relevance in terms of study design and exposure assessment, because of difficulties in discriminating between exposure to glyphosate and to other pesticides. The Advisory Group also considered the importance of clarifying glyphosate formulations in future evaluations of the mechanistic data in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of glyphosate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 126 Phosmet (CAS No. 732-11-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Phosmet has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Phosmet is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### Exposure characterization

Phosmet is an organophosphate pesticide, consisting of a phthalimide group and a dithiophosphate ester group, with two methyl groups. It is a non-systemic organophosphate insecticide used on a wide variety of crops and for ticks and fleas on domestic and farm animals. Approval to use phosmet was withdrawn in the EU in 2022 (European Food Safety Authority (EFSA) et al., 2021; European Commission, 2022). It is still used in the USA, although there are some mitigation actions required by registrants (US EPA, 2023b).

A study of Chilean children calculated that 19% were exposed to phosmet residues in fruit and vegetables (Muñoz-Quezada et al., 2012). Occupational exposure in farming has been documented, but clothing and gloves provide good protection from exposure for applicators (Stewart et al., 1999).

### Cancer in humans

A case–control study of childhood leukaemia in the USA used data on pesticide use and residential history to model exposure to pesticides (Park et al., 2020) and found an association with phosmet (OR, 2.10; 95% CI, 1.30–3.39) in the fully adjusted model.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Information released by the US EPA Office of Pesticide Programs in 2006 about a carcinogenicity study in mice indicated that phosmet caused increases in liver carcinomas/adenomas in males and increased mammary gland tumours in females, but was not carcinogenic in rats (US EPA, 2016). However, in another study of male rats, phosmet exposure induced lung adenomas (Hasegawa et al., 1993).

### Mechanistic evidence

Phosmet induced single-strand breaks in DNA, exhibiting a weak mutagenic effect without metabolic activation but significantly stronger with the S9 fraction (Slamenová et al., 1992). Furthermore, phosmet decreased DNA synthesis independently of cellular death and lowered the cell percentage in the S-phase. Induction of oxidative stress was reported in juvenile rainbow trout (*O. mykiss*) subjected to phosmet treatment (Muhammed and Dogan, 2021). Phosmet exhibited a distinctive toxicity signature, including impairing cell viability and inducing inflammatory response (Guiñazú et al., 2012).

Phosmet increased progesterone activity in human H295R adrenocortical carcinoma cells with reported mammary gland effects (Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024). It showed binding activity to the AR, and CYP induction, in a few reporter gene assays, as reported in the ToxCast database (US EPA, 2024i). In the human JEG-3 choriocarcinoma cell line, phosmet exerted concentration- and time-dependent effects on cellular viability, leading to apoptosis and reduced [<sup>3</sup>H]thymidine incorporation (Guiñazú et al., 2012).

### Summary

There is only one study of cancer in humans in relation to phosmet, with relatively weak exposure assessment quality. There is evidence of increased incidence of some benign and malignant tumours in male and female mice and male rats. There is sparse mechanistic evidence that phosmet exhibits some of the KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, alterations in receptor-mediated effects and cell proliferation and cell death, in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of phosmet is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 127 Terbufos (CAS No. 13071-79-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Terbufos has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Terbufos is on the priority list for the JMPR. Terbufos was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Terbufos is an organothiophosphate insecticide that has historically had widespread agricultural use as an insecticide and nematocide. As of 2023, terbufos is not approved by the EU (ECHA, 2023d). In the USA, it continues to be registered for widespread use (US EPA, 2006c). There are no residential uses registered for terbufos (US EPA, 2015). Exposure is expected to occur mainly in agricultural workers handling and applying the substance (US EPA, 2015).

## Cancer in humans

Within the AHS cohort, there was a significant exposure–response relation between terbufos and prostate cancer, particularly aggressive prostate cancer (Koutros et al., 2013). More recent findings in the AHS suggest that terbufos may interact with specific prostate cancer genetic susceptibility variants identified through genome-wide association studies (Hurwitz et al., 2023). The AHS has also evaluated associations with cancer at other sites; of note, while there was no overall association with NHL, there was an exposure–response relation between terbufos and small B-cell lymphocytic lymphoma (SLL)/chronic B-cell lymphocytic leukaemia (CLL)/mantle cell lymphoma (MCL) (Alavanja et al., 2014a). Within the AGRICOH Consortium, which includes the AHS, there was an elevation of NHL overall based on ever use, which seemed to be driven by CLL/SLL and follicular lymphoma (Leon et al., 2019). In the pooled data from the NAPP, results for lymphoma from population-based case–control studies showed no evidence of association with ever use or duration of use (Koutros et al., 2019). Among the spouses of the AHS farmers, there was an association between terbufos and breast cancer based on self-reported personal use (Lerro et al., 2015), and based on use by their husbands (Engel et al., 2017).

## Cancer in experimental animals

No studies on carcinogenicity in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

Wu et al. (2011) reported that terbufos induces DNA damage and apoptosis in HepG2 cells exposed to concentrations of 50–200  $\mu$ M for 2 hours. Complementing the findings of overall associations between terbufos and aggressive prostate cancer risk (Koutros et al., 2013), Koutros et al. (2010) explored interactions between pesticide use, genetic variants on chromosome 8q24, and prostate cancer risk. They observed significant interactions between certain variants on chromosome 8q24 and exposure to organophosphate and pyrethroid insecticides, particularly fonofos. This suggests that genetic predispositions may modify the association between pesticide exposure and prostate cancer risk.

Moreover, Andreotti et al. (2012) reported findings suggesting that genetic variation in lipid metabolism genes may modify pesticide associations with prostate cancer. Notably, one association was found between ALOXE3 rs3027208 and terbufos, highlighting the potential role of lipid metabolism pathways in mediating the effects of pesticides on prostate cancer risk. These studies collectively underscore the complex interaction between pesticide exposure, genetic factors, and biological pathways involved in prostate and breast carcinogenesis.

Potential mechanisms for carcinogenicity have been reported, including that terbufos may influence risk of prostate cancer by altering signalling pathways involved in cellular adhesion, proliferation, and differentiation (Zhang et al., 2012b; Koutros et al., 2013; Christensen et al., 2016). Terbufos also alters steroid hormone metabolism and inhibits testosterone. The study by Zhang et al. (2012b) identified specific genes and pathways that were affected by terbufos exposure-induced DNA methylation alterations. While the exact genes and pathways affected may vary depending on cell type and context, the study provided insights into some of the potential targets (Christensen et al., 2016).

A genome-wide DNA methylation analysis of samples obtained from human haematopoietic K562 cell lines exposed to several pesticides (including terbufos) revealed that differential methylation was associated with numerous genes that are involved in carcinogenesis-related processes (Zhang et al., 2012b).

## Summary

The human cancer evidence, while not entirely consistent, shows evidence of elevated risk of NHL in several studies, both cohort and case–control. In addition, there is consistent evidence within a large cohort of pesticide applicators of increased risk of aggressive prostate cancer, including interaction with prostate

cancer genetic susceptibility loci identified through genome-wide association studies. Two analyses within the AHS, one focused on personal use and one focused on use by pesticide applicator husbands both suggested an increased risk of breast cancer. No studies were available of cancer in experimental animals.

There is some mechanistic evidence from studies in exposed humans and experimental systems that terbufos exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation. The Advisory Group, on the basis of emerging evidence of cancers in humans, considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of terbufos to be warranted and recommended that this agent be evaluated together with other organophosphates in this report (chlorpyrifos, agent 123; fonofos, agent 124; phosmet, agent 126; and malathion, agent 131).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years).

## 128 Ethylenedithiocarbamates

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Ethylenedithiocarbamates – sodium diethyldithiocarbamate (CAS No. 148-18-5), potassium bis(2-hydroxyethyl)dithiocarbamate (CAS No. 23746-34-1), disulfiram (CAS No. 97-77-8), thiram (CAS No. 97-77-8), nabam (CAS No. 142-59-6), ferbam (CAS No. 14484-64-1), zineb (CAS No. 12122-67-7) and ziram (CAS No. 137-30-4) – have previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1976a, 1987a). Ethylene thiourea (ETU; the main metabolite of ethylenedithiocarbamates) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Supplement 7 and in Volume 79 in 2001 (IARC, 2001). Ethylenedithiocarbamates are on the priority list for the JMPR. Mancozeb has been nominated for prioritization and is discussed separately in this report (see agent 132).

### Exposure characterization

Ethylenedithiocarbamates (also called ethylenebisdithiocarbamates or EBDCs) are complexes of a dithiocarbamate with manganese, zinc or a combination of manganese and zinc. They include disulfiram, thiram, nabam, ferbam, zineb, ziram, maneb (CAS No. 12427-38-2), metiram (CAS No. 9006-42-2), mancozeb (CAS No. 8018-01-7), and propineb (CAS No. 12071-83-9) (Cocco, 2022). The main metabolite of the EBDCs is ethylene thiourea (CAS No. 96-45-7) (Cocco, 2022).

Disulfiram, zineb, maneb, and propineb are listed as high production volume chemicals by the OECD (2007). Mancozeb was one of the most commonly used conventional pesticide active ingredients in the USA in 2012 (US EPA, 2017b) and is widely used in India, with over 28% of the world market being in this country (Industry Data Analytics, 2020). Mancozeb was banned in the EU in 2021 due to its endocrine-disrupting and reproductive effects (FAS, 2020). Various EBDCs have been used as fungicides in agriculture since the 1940s, and some are also used in the vulcanization of rubber (Cocco, 2022). Disulfiram is also used in the pharmaceutical treatment of alcohol dependence (Cocco, 2022). Some EBDCs are soluble in water, and mancozeb and thiourea have been detected in urine in farm workers (Kurtio and Savolainen, 1990; Colosio et al., 2002) and residents of agricultural areas (Castorina et al., 2010; van Wendel de Joode et al., 2014), as well as in adults (Saieva et al., 2004) and children (Castiello et al., 2023) in the general population.

### Cancer in humans

A recent review summarized the literature on EBDCs and cancer (Cocco, 2022). A case-control study in Italy and Brazil found an association between fungicide use and melanoma after adjusting for sun

exposure and other variables (OR, 3.88; 95% CI, 1.17–12.9) and the most commonly used fungicides in this study included mancozeb, maneb, zineb and ziram (Fortes et al., 2016).

In a cohort of members of a farmworker union, several nested case–control studies revealed an increased risk for several cancers with mancozeb exposure (described elsewhere) and for maneb and stomach cancer (OR, 1.26; 95% CI, 0.67–2.38). No association was found between various EBDCs and thyroid cancer in the AHS cohort (Lerro et al., 2021). In the AGRICAN cohort, significant associations between EBDCs and primary CNS tumours were observed for thiram (HR, 1.80; 95% CI, 1.19–2.73;  $n_{\text{exposed}} = 67$ ), cupreb, ferbam, propineb, zineb and/or ziram (HR, 1.89; 95% CI, 1.21–2.93;  $n_{\text{exposed}} = 46$ ) and mancozeb, maneb and/or metiram (HR, 1.84; 95% CI, 1.23–2.74;  $n_{\text{exposed}} = 70$ ) (Piel et al., 2019b).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *limited* evidence of carcinogenicity in animals for potassium bis(2-hydroxyethyl)dithiocarbamate. New studies of cancer in experimental animals exposed to ethylenedithiocarbamates and their main metabolite ETU have been published since the previous monograph (Belpoggi et al., 2002).

Cancer induced in experimental animals by mancozeb is described elsewhere in this report (agent 132). No significant increase in tumours was observed in F344 rats or B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice of either sex treated with sodium diethyldithiocarbamate (NCI, 1979a). However, the study included an unusually low number of animals (16–20) in concurrent control groups compared with treated groups (50) and the incidence of thyroid follicular cell adenoma, a rare tumour, in treated groups of male rats (4/50, 8%, 2/49; 4%) exceeded the range in NTP historical controls during 1984–1997 (7/902, overall incidence 0.78%, range 0–2%) (NTP, 1997a).

A study in rats on thiram (Hasegawa et al., 1988b) and a study in mice and rats on metiram (Charles et al., 2000) did not report any increase in tumours.

Carcinogenicity studies of orally administered ETU were conducted in rats and mice of each sex (NTP, 1992a). The studies were designed to determine the effects of ETU in rats and mice receiving adult exposure only, perinatal exposure only (dietary exposure of dams before breeding and throughout gestation and lactation) or combined perinatal and adult exposure. With adult-only dietary exposures in male and female rats, incidence was increased of thyroid follicular cell neoplasms while in the equivalent groups of male and female mice, increases in the incidence of thyroid follicular cell neoplasms, hepatocellular neoplasms, and adenomas of the pars distalis of the pituitary gland were observed. Perinatal exposure alone had no effect on the incidence of neoplasms in rats or mice after 2 years. Combined perinatal and 2-year adult dietary exposure to ethylene thiourea confirmed the findings for 2-year adult-only exposures regarding the incidence of neoplasms in the thyroid gland of rats and mice and the liver and pituitary gland of mice. In male and female rats, combined perinatal and adult exposure was also associated with increases in Zymbal's gland neoplasms and mononuclear cell leukaemia.

### Mechanistic evidence

New mechanistic studies on ethylenedithiocarbamates and their main metabolite ETU have been published since the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation. Genotoxicity studies in rats exposed to mancozeb revealed elevated micronucleus frequency and DNA damage (Goldoni et al., 2014). In studies using human cell lines and primary human cells in vitro, ethylenedithiocarbamates induced elevated micronucleus frequency, DNA damage, inhibition of DNA repair, cytotoxicity, and oxidative stress (Perocco et al., 1989; Lori et al., 2021). Exposure to the dithiocarbamate fungicide maneb in vitro and in vivo induced neuronal apoptosis and mitochondrial dysfunction, and generated ROS in a dose-dependent manner (Liu et al., 2023c). Thyroid inhibition, with increased TSH levels and decreased T4 levels, was reported in workers exposed to ethylenedithiocarbamates or ETU (Medda et al., 2017; Panganiban et al., 2004; Piccoli et al.,

2016). In the 2-year studies, perinatal and adult exposures of rats and mice to ETU, endocrine, inflammatory and hyperplastic effects involved the thyroid gland. Serum levels of T4 and/or T3 were significantly decreased in rats, while TSH was significantly increased, and the incidence of follicular cell hyperplasia or follicular cell adenoma of the thyroid gland was significantly increased relative to the controls (Kurtio et al., 1986; NTP, 1992a). ETU induced DNA damage and DNA repair synthesis in primary cultures of human thyroid cells (Mattioli et al., 2006).

### Summary

These agents constitute a class of related pesticides. While a few studies in humans have looked at various combinations of ethylenedithiocarbamates, the findings are not consistent as to the type of ethylenedithiocarbamate or the tumour site. A few of the positive results concern mancozeb, which is considered separately in this report. Carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats exposed to some ethylenedithiocarbamates or their metabolite ETU reported increases of various tumours in both sexes. Mechanistic studies on some ethylenedithiocarbamates or ETU in various models reported that the group of listed ethylenedithiocarbamates exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, genomic instability, receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation. This mechanistic evidence supports the re-evaluation of several of the agents and ETU. The Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ethylenedithiocarbamates to be warranted together with ETU (see also the recommendation for mancozeb, agent 132).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 129 *S*-Ethyl-*N,N*-dipropylthiocarbamate (EPTC) (CAS No. 759-94-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*S*-Ethyl-*N,N*-dipropylthiocarbamate (EPTC) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. EPTC was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

EPTC is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “EPTC is a thiocarbamate herbicide that is widely used to selectively control annual and perennial grass weeds and some broadleaf in citrus, bean, corn, potato, and pineapple. Occupational and residential exposure to EPTC residues via dermal and inhalation routes can occur during handling activities. In 1999, the US EPA classified EPTC as “not likely to be carcinogenic to humans” (US EPA, 2008b).”

### Cancer in humans

As noted by the 2019 Advisory Group (IARC, 2019a), an earlier report of the AHS cohort found a modestly increased risk of NHL among farmers who applied carbamate pesticides, compared with non-farmers. An update of the AHS found an excess risk of cancers of the colorectum and pancreas, with suggestive evidence of an association with leukaemia and NHL (van Bemmelen et al., 2008). A case–control study of pancreatic cancer nested in the AHS cohort found statistically significant exposure–response associations for EPTC (Andreotti et al., 2009). No new studies since this report were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

The few available studies did not observe carcinogenic activity (US EPA, 1999, 2011b).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The 2019 Advisory Group noted that “mutagenicity tests such as the in vivo micronucleus test or the *Drosophila* sex-linked recessive lethal mutation assay were negative. A few studies in experimental animals found that EPTC sulfoxide can form DNA adducts and induces DNA damage. EPTC also has been classified as nitrosatable. Nitrosamine compounds are potent animal carcinogens related to different types of cancer, including pancreatic cancer”. Since then, few new data have been published. One study on human epigenetics reported positive findings for EPTC (Alexander et al., 2017).

### **Summary**

The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of EPTC is unwarranted at present, in view of the few available studies.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **130 Hexythiazox (CAS No. 78587-05-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Hexythiazox has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Hexythiazox is an acaricide used in agricultural applications (PubChem, 2024e). Residues have been found on fruit and vegetables and in drinking-water (FAO/WHO, 2020; US EPA, 2020a). Dermal (non-occupational) exposure is possible in areas that may experience overspray from agricultural applications, with possible incidental oral exposure in children (US EPA, 2020a). Occupational exposures are likely to occur during agricultural applications, but no specific data were identified.

### **Cancer in humans**

A case–control study evaluating prenatal and early-childhood exposure to pesticides (exposure estimated based on address at birth) observed no convincing association between hexythiazox and acute lymphocytic leukaemia in children aged < 6 years (OR, 1.09; 95% CI, 0.71–1.69); the interpretation was unchanged when the estimate was adjusted for exposure to other pesticides (Park et al., 2020).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Two chronic toxicity and carcinogenicity studies with dietary administration of hexythiazox are summarized in a report from the JMPR (FAO/WHO, 2010). In F344 rats, there were increases in mammary gland fibroadenomas and testicular interstitial cell adenoma in males, but no treatment-related tumour findings in females. In B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice fed hexythiazox, there was increased incidence of hepatocellular adenomas in males and females. A non-significant increased incidence of hepatoblastomas was observed in male mice.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Hexythiazox has tested negative for genotoxicity in a wide range of assays in vitro and in vivo, including CHO cells, rat primary hepatocytes and mouse bone marrow, and bacteria (FAO/WHO, 2010). Hexythiazox is reported as active in 183 ToxCast assays, including altered signalling of nuclear receptors, e.g. estrogen, androgen, progesterone receptors, and pregnane X receptor (PXR) in human cell lines. In a separate analysis of the public ToxCast data set, hexythiazox was shown to be among the highest efficacy/potency at increasing production of estradiol in a human cell line-based steroidogenesis assay (Cardona and Rudel, 2021).

## Summary

Human cancer studies are scarce, with a single epidemiological study identified, which observed no associations. Available data indicate that hexythiazox induces benign tumours in experimental animals. Mechanistic evidence that hexythiazox exhibits KCs is sparse and limited to modulation of receptor-mediated effects in experimental systems in vitro (high-throughput screening).

The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of hexythiazox is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 131 Malathion (CAS No. 121-75-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Malathion has previously been evaluated in 2015 by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in Volume 112 (IARC, 2017a), on the basis of a combination of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (for prostate cancer and NHL) and *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

Malathion is a broad-spectrum organophosphate insecticide, listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). In the USA it is the most frequently used organophosphate insecticide (Sergi, 2019). It is formulated as a dust, wettable powder, emulsifiable concentrate, ready-to-use liquid or pressurized liquid. Exposure to malathion may occur through its use in agriculture, residential or public-health applications, notably mosquito control. Occupational exposure occurs mainly via the dermal route. The general population is exposed to malathion from residues on food, from living near areas where malathion is sprayed, or through personal use of products containing malathion. It is a prescription drug approved by the US FDA for the treatment of infestation with head lice (Calaf, 2023; CDC, 2024).

### Cancer in humans

In the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation of malathion in 2015, positive associations were observed with NHL and cancer of the prostate (IARC, 2017a).

Since 2015, one cohort study, two pooled case–control studies, and a meta-analysis on NHL have been published. The cohort study found decreased risk of NHL among spouses of pesticide applicators (Lerro et al., 2015). The meta-analysis showed a statistically non-significant association between NHL and malathion exposure (Hu et al., 2017). The US/Canadian pooled case–control study supported an association between malathion use and NHL overall and provided new information on associations with NHL subtypes (Koutros et al., 2019), while the non-overlapping US/EU/Canadian/Australian pooled case–control study did not find an association between occupational exposure to malathion and NHL (De Roos et al., 2021). The AGRICOH pooled study of three cohorts, including the US AHS plus French and Norwegian cohorts, found no association with NHL overall, based on 1208 cases (Leon et al., 2019). Since 2015, two case–control studies on prostate cancer have been published, one of which found an association of malathion exposure with prostate cancer (Abhishek et al., 2020) and the other did not (Hurwitz et al., 2023).

Since 2015, studies on malathion exposure and other cancers have been published. In the AHS cohort, malathion exposure was associated with increased risk of thyroid cancer among spouses of pesticide applicators (Lerro et al., 2015). In a pooled analysis of US and Canadian population-based studies, among people aged  $\leq 40$  years, a duration of use of 1–5 years and frequency of use of 1–2 days per year of malathion



was statistically significantly associated with Hodgkin lymphoma (HL) (Latifovic et al., 2020). In a French cohort study, a positive association was found for high exposure to malathion and postmenopausal breast cancer risk among overweight and obese women (Rebouillat et al., 2021). A population-based case-control study in California found that prenatal residential proximity to malathion applications was associated with increased risk of testicular germ cell tumours among Latino adolescents (Swartz et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 2017a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of malathion, on the basis of tumours in two species and both sexes in feeding studies, and via subcutaneous injection in one study in females. The metabolite malaoxon has since been reported to induce thyroid gland C-cell adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in males and female rats in one study and leukaemia in males in a second study, both with dietary administration (IARC, 2017a). Malathion was also identified as a tumour promoter of hepatocarcinogenesis in rats in a medium-term bioassay (Hasegawa and Ito, 1992; Ito et al., 1994).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Malathion exhibits *strong* mechanistic evidence for the KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation. Specifically, evidence for genotoxicity was found in various test systems including exposed humans (IARC, 2017a). Since the previous evaluation, new studies of exposed humans have further contributed to the mechanistic evidence for malathion. Analysis of genetic variants in farmers from the AHS cohort found positive interactions between pesticides, including malathion, and individual genetic variants occurring in regions associated with DNA damage response (CDH3, EMSY genes) and with variants related to altered AR-driven transcriptional programmes critical for prostate cancer (Hurwitz et al., 2023). In another analysis investigating cellular and genetic effects of pesticide exposure in farmers from a region of Sanghar, Sindh, Pakistan, the authors reported a significant difference in genotypic and allelic frequencies of pesticide-exposed subjects compared with controls (Imran et al., 2022). Increased DNA damage, measured by comet assay, has also been observed in blood samples from a group of workers in a pesticide factory in Multan, Pakistan. The damage, as tail length, correlated with the concentration of malathion in the blood (Arshad et al., 2016). Similar findings were reported in a group of 223 rice field workers in Colombia, exposed to a mixture containing malathion (Varona-Urbe et al., 2016). Studies in exposed humans have identified an association between malathion exposure and alteration of the immune system. Medithi et al. (2022b) observed significant decrease in the levels of CD3+, CD4+, CD8+, CD16+ and CD19+ phenotypes in a group of women and children occupationally exposed in the Rangareddy district (Telangana, India) (Medithi et al., 2022b). In a prospective cohort of pesticide applicators from a study including more than 12 200 farmers (1993–1997; North Carolina and Iowa) and followed for about 12 years, Parks et al. (2021) identified an increased incidence of shingles, the clinical reactivation of varicella-zoster virus, in exposed farmers compared to non-exposed. A case report of generalized sclerosis was also associated with malathion exposure in two exposed children (Sozeri et al., 2012). Recent evidence has confirmed that in exposed humans, mainly occupationally exposed, malathion was associated with modulation of receptor-mediated effects. Alteration of follicle-stimulating hormone (FSH) was observed in the group of occupationally exposed women of the Rangareddy district (Telangana, India) (Medithi et al., 2022b). Long-term exposure (about 20 years) to malathion in pesticide applicators enrolled in the AHS has been linked to increased incidence of altered thyroid functions (Shrestha et al., 2018a). Similar findings were reported in previous studies (Lerro et al., 2015; Goldner et al., 2013). Malathion levels in follicular fluid collected from a group of women aged 20–38 years, affiliated with a university fertility centre in Egypt, were reported to be associated with alteration of endometrial thickness (Al-Hussaini et al., 2018).

## Summary

There is new epidemiological evidence for the carcinogenicity of malathion, but it would be unlikely to influence the current classification in Group 2A. The evidence of cancer in experimental animals has already been evaluated as *sufficient*. Malathion exhibits convincing mechanistic evidence of several KCs in exposed humans. The overall evidence could support a change of classification. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *malathion* to be warranted, together with other organophosphates prioritized in this report.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 132 Mancozeb (CAS No. 8018-01-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Mancozeb has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Mancozeb was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence of skin cancer in humans and malignant tumours seen in animal bioassays. Mancozeb is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### Exposure characterization

Mancozeb, an ethylenedithiocarbamate pesticide (see agent 128), is a broad-spectrum contact fungicide that is labelled for use on many fruit, vegetable, nut, and field crops. It provides protection against a wide spectrum of fungal diseases, including potato blight, leaf spot, scab, and rust. It is also used as seed treatment for potatoes, corn, sorghum, tomatoes, and cereal grains (Anastassiadou et al., 2020; Costa et al., 2022). Mancozeb has been listed as a high production volume chemical by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a).

Occupational exposure to mancozeb occurs mainly in the agriculture and farming industries (in key sectors of mancozeb production and application), through either inhalation or direct skin contact, with dermal absorption representing the main route of exposure (Costa et al., 2022; Tait et al., 2022). Therefore, dermal assessment is considered relevant for exposure evaluation, especially in greenhouses, where the temperature is often very high, creating conditions for high absorption rates of mancozeb (Liu et al., 2003; Abdourahime et al., 2020). The general population can be exposed to mancozeb through ingestion of food containing pesticide residues (Anastassiadou et al., 2020). The use of mancozeb was banned in the EU in 2021 (European Commission, 2020b).

In Matina, a large banana plantation area in Costa Rica, exposure to mancozeb was evaluated in 445 pregnant women with determination of urinary levels of the metabolite ETU; three samples were taken from each woman during pregnancy. Specific gravity-corrected urinary ETU concentration was 3.1 µg/L and creatinine-corrected ETU was 3.0 µg/g creatinine. Dermal exposure in Italian greenhouse workers was evaluated with both skin pads and blood samples. The median level of ETU absorbed was 0.31 µg/kg bw, and the median urinary ETU was 8 µg/g creatinine (Costa et al., 2022).

### Cancer in humans

A study examined exposure–response relations for 50 agricultural pesticides and cutaneous melanoma incidence in the AHS cohort of licensed pesticide applicators. Results showed a strong association between cutaneous melanoma and maneb/mancozeb (63 exposure days: OR, 2.4; 95% CI, 1.2–4.9; *P* for trend, 0.006) (Dennis et al., 2010). In a pooled analysis of two case–control studies in Italy and Brazil, the use of fungicides was associated with a high risk of cutaneous melanoma (OR, 3.88; 95% CI, 1.17–12.9). The authors did not evaluate mancozeb in particular but noted that it was the most common fungicide used (Fortes et al., 2016).

The French AGRICAN cohort analyses showed increased risk of CNS tumours with overall exposure to carbamate fungicides, a class that includes mancozeb. Specifically, the study found a RR, 2.17 (95% CI, 1.30–3.62) of CNS tumours for those with > 30 years duration of mancozeb use (Piel et al., 2019b). A nested case–control study of farm workers in California estimated exposure by linking county/month and crop-specific job history information from union records with California Department of Pesticide Regulation pesticide use reports and found that workers with mancozeb exposure had an increased risk of leukaemia compared with those without mancozeb exposure (OR, 2.35; 95% CI, 1.12–4.95) (Mills et al., 2005).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Mancozeb administered in diet, at 0–750 ppm, for up to 104 weeks increased the incidence of thyroid adenomas and thyroid carcinomas in a two-year study in Crl:CD®BR rats. No tumorigenic response was seen in another study in rats at doses up to 454 ppm (EFSA, 2018). However, no primary data are available for the regulatory study reports. In Sprague-Dawley rats, mancozeb administered at concentrations of 0–1000 ppm in feed supplied ad libitum for 104 weeks increased occurrences of benign and malignant tumours in several organs compared with controls. Increases were seen in mammary tumours in females; Zymbal gland and ear duct carcinomas in males; head and neck carcinomas in males and in females of all treated groups; HCCs in males; pancreatic malignant tumours in males and females; thyroid gland tumours and haemolymphoreticular neoplasia in both sexes (Belpoggi et al., 2002). Carcinogenicity was not observed in two 18-month dietary oncogenicity studies in CD-1 mice up to the top dose of 1000 ppm (130/180 mg/kg bw per day in males and females), even though signs of toxicity and reduction of T4 were observed (EFSA, 2018). In other studies, mancozeb induced neoplastic alterations (keratinocyte differentiation and proliferation) in mice and promoted the formation of benign squamous cell papillomas and skin keratoacanthomas, as well as promoting transplacental carcinogenesis in TPA-pretreated mice (Tyagi et al., 2011; Shukla et al., 1990; Shukla and Arora, 2001). Of note, the major metabolite of mancozeb, ethylene thiourea (ETU) is also a rodent carcinogen (NTP, 2021a).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Fifty per cent of mancozeb is absorbed within hours after oral administration in rats. It distributes widely in the thyroid tissues and is excreted in the urine and faeces. It is metabolized (over 95%) through hydrolysis and oxidation to the final product glycine. However, the major metabolites detected in urine and bile of rats are ETU, ethylene urea, ethylenediamine (EDA) and *N*-acetyl-EDA.

Mancozeb was tested in the classical genotoxicity battery, including for gene mutagenicity in various *Salmonella* strains and in mammalian cells, chromosomal aberrations, and micronuclei as well as UDS and SCE in vitro and in vivo, chromosomal aberrations and micronuclei in bone marrow; results were mostly negative (Garrett et al., 1986; Perocco et al., 1989; EFSA, 2018). No primary data are available for the regulatory study reports. However, mancozeb induced DNA damage in various test systems, including in exposed humans. Specifically, Jablonická et al. (1989) observed increases of chromosomal aberrations and SCE in cultures of peripheral lymphocytes of 44 workers exposed to mancozeb during the production of another pesticide. Cytogenetic effects were also observed in a group of 49 farmers from Mexico involved in spraying mixed pesticides. Levels of SCE and chromosomal translocations were increased in cultures of whole blood samples from the farmers compared with control subjects not involved in spraying. Urinary levels of ETU were used to assess exposure to the pesticide mixture; however, a clear measurement of mancozeb was lacking (Steenland et al., 1997). Paz-Trejo and Gómez-Arroyo (2017) observed increased DNA damage and micronuclei in human peripheral blood lymphocytes in vitro. The increase in DNA damage, measured mostly by comet assay, was observed either in vitro or in vivo and was often coupled with concomitant increases of oxidative stress or inflammatory response markers (Saber et al., 2019; Lori et

al., 2021; Stanic et al., 2021). Specifically, Lori et al. (2021) observed altered expression of DNA repair (ERCC1/OGG1) which is involved in the excision of oxidative stress-related damage.

Mancozeb alters antioxidant defence mechanisms in several in vitro and in vivo systems. Mancozeb exposure induced oxidative stress in human primary hepatocytes, HepaRG cells, isolated human erythrocytes and various other tissues in vivo (Bao et al., 2022; Zhang et al., 2022c; Quds et al., 2023; Suarez Uribe et al., 2023; Petitjean et al., 2024). Increases in serum biomarkers of oxidative stress such as lipid peroxidation, reactive oxygen metabolites, advanced oxidation protein products (AOPPs), and biological antioxidant potential were found associated with the levels of ETU measured (pre-post shift work) on the skin and in the urine of 19 greenhouse farmers involved in mancozeb-spraying in eastern Sicily (Italy) (Costa et al., 2022)

Mancozeb modulates receptor-mediated effects, specifically affecting the thyroid pathway in vitro and in vivo in various species (Ksheerasagar and Kaliwal, 2003; Axelstad et al., 2011; Bhaskar and Mohanty, 2014; Hallinger et al., 2017). The effect on the thyroid is mediated by the mancozeb metabolite ETU (Freyberger and Ahr, 2006; Price et al., 2020). The rat has been reported to be the most sensitive species to the effect of mancozeb and ETU on the thyroid (EFSA, 2018). Mancozeb exposure of mice between postnatal days 30 and 60 induced a reduction in plasma levels of T3 and T4 hormones, an increase in TSH, and a reduction in spleen and thymus weight and cellularity (Bano and Mohanty, 2020). Some evidence of thyroid disruption in exposed humans is also available. A small study among farmers from four banana plantations in the Philippines found higher mean TSH measurements among workers exposed to ethylenebisdithiocarbamates compared with non-exposed workers, which were correlated with blood but not urine levels of ETU. In some of the workers, thyroid nodules were also detected and correlated with blood ETU. However, the study failed to define the exposure clearly (Panganiban et al., 2004). Thyroid-disrupting effects, mainly of mild proportions, were reported in a group of 177 workers from two Italian regions, Chianti and Alto Adige, compared with 74 controls. Increased urinary levels of iodine were more pronounced in more exposed workers from the Chianti region, an area with mild iodine deficiency (Medda et al., 2017). Long-term exposure to mancozeb in spouses of farmers in the AHS has been linked to increased incidence of altered thyroid functions (Shrestha et al., 2018b). Apart from effects on the thyroid pathway, mounting evidence from experimental systems indicates that mancozeb may also affect other hormone signalling (Skalny et al., 2021). Alterations to the thyroid pathway were also linked to immune system changes. Almeida Roque et al. (2023) described alterations in human THP-1 leukaemia monocytic cells (Almeida Roque et al., 2023). Parks et al. (2016) described an association between exposure to maneb/mancozeb and rheumatoid arthritis in spouses of farmers from the AHS cohort who were enrolled between 1993 and 1997 and followed up to 2010. An association was identified between prenatal exposure to some pesticides, including mancozeb, as assessed by measuring ETU, and lower respiratory tract infections among 5-year-old children ( $n = 303$ ) from the Infants' Environmental Health Study in Costa Rica (Islam et al., 2023). Data are available in the US EPA's Toxicity Forecaster (ToxCast) programme.

## Summary

Two studies found increased risk of cutaneous melanoma; however, for both studies, the results were not necessarily specific to mancozeb, and may be attributed to other carbamate fungicides such as maneb. One cohort study reported increased risk of CNS tumours with longer duration of exposure to mancozeb, while another study reported an increased risk of leukaemia among farm workers. Given the uncertainties of attributing the melanoma results to mancozeb specifically, and the single reports of other cancer sites, the human cancer evidence may make an uncertain contribution to a future carcinogenicity evaluation. Evidence of cancer in experimental animals is available mainly for thyroid adenomas and thyroid carcinomas in rats and other tumours. Neoplastic alterations and promoting activity were reported in mice. Mancozeb exhibits mechanistic evidence of several KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, immunosuppression and

modulation of receptor-mediated effects in exposed humans, in primary cells and in several experimental systems. The emerging mechanistic evidence from all three systems supports an evaluation of the agent, although for the studies in humans, there may be limitations in the exposure assessment or other study quality concerns. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of mancozeb to be warranted, together with other ethylenedithiocarbamates included in this report and their common metabolite, ethylene thiourea (see agent 128).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

### 133 Metyltetraprole (CAS No. 1472649-01-6)

#### Current IARC/WHO classification

Metyltetraprole has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

#### Exposure characterization

Metyltetraprole is a relatively new antifungal agent (introduced in 2018) used in agricultural applications, and classified as “a member of tetrazoles, a pyrazole pesticide and a member of monochlorobenzenes” (PubChem, 2024f). It is used on cereals and some other crops. No literature on circulating or excreted levels in humans was found.

#### Cancer in humans

No studies evaluating cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

#### Cancer in experimental animals

Two OECD guideline oral chronic toxicity and carcinogenicity studies were summarized in a Draft Assessment Report prepared for EU pesticide registration purposes (ECHA, 2022a). Han Wistar rats fed metyltetraprole in the diet had increased incidence of malignant lymphomas in males and females, and uterine schwannomas and mammary gland adenoma or adenocarcinoma (combined) in females. In CD-1 mice, dietary administration of metyltetraprole led to an increased incidence of malignant lymphomas in males and histiocytic sarcomas in females.

#### Mechanistic evidence

As summarized in the Draft Assessment Report prepared for EU pesticide registration purposes, metyltetraprole gave negative results in several genotoxicity studies in vitro and in vivo (ECHA, 2022a). Metyltetraprole is extensively metabolized, via *N*-demethylation of the tetrazole ring and oxidation of the 3-methyl group on the phenyl ring, followed by glucuronide conjugation. Increased lymphocyte counts and decreased thymus and spleen weight were observed in rats following chronic oral administration (ECHA, 2022a). No published toxicity studies or bioactivity screening data are available.

#### Summary

Metyltetraprole was recently introduced and no studies of cancer in humans were identified. Data are available indicating that metyltetraprole is carcinogenic in experimental animals. There is sparse evidence that metyltetraprole exhibits certain KCs, in particular immunosuppression in exposed animals. The Advisory Group noted that, although the aforementioned evidence in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence comes solely from unpublished studies as summarized in publicly available regulatory assessment documents, all the raw data and other needed information are available in these publicly available reports including annexes. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of metyltetraprole to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 134 Neonicotinoid insecticides

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Neonicotinoid insecticides have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Neonicotinoid insecticides are on the priority list for the JMPR.

### Exposure characterization

Neonicotinoids are a class of neuro-active insecticides chemically similar to nicotine, which act as agonists on nicotinic acetylcholine receptors.

As of 2011 there were seven neonicotinoid insecticides on the market (Jeschke et al., 2011). Three were cyclic compounds: imidacloprid (CAS No. 138261-41-3) and thiacloprid (CAS No. 111988-49-9) which have a five-ring structure, and thiamethoxam (CAS No. 153719-23-4) which has a six-ring structure. Four were noncyclic compounds: nitenpyram (CAS No. 150824-47-8), acetamiprid (CAS No. 135410-20-7), clothianidin (CAS No. 210880-92-5), and dinotefuran (Jeschke et al., 2011) (CAS No. 165252-70-0). The more recently marketed generation of neonicotinoids includes cycloxaprid (CAS No. 1203791-41-6), imidaclothiz (CAS No. 105843-36-5), paichongding (CAS No. 948994-16-9), sulfoxaflor (CAS No. 946578-00-3), guadipyr (CAS No. 1376342-13-0), and flupyradifurone (CAS No. 951659-40-8) (Giorio et al., 2021; Hou et al., 2021). None of the neonicotinoid insecticides appear on the 2007 OECD list of high production volume chemicals. Large increases in urinary 6-chloronicotinic acid can occur after spraying of imidacloprid (Tao et al., 2019).

Neonicotinoids are the most widely used class of insecticide worldwide, having replaced organophosphates due to their lower toxicity to humans and the environment (Klingelhöfer et al., 2022). They are used in agriculture, veterinary practice, and domestically, and have high persistence in the environment in soils, water, and food. Concern for the effects on bees has led to banning of some neonicotinoids in the EU and the USA, but they are still used widely in other countries (ECHA, 2024b).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Administration of the neonicotinoid sulfoxaflor increased hepatocellular adenomas and carcinomas after 18 months in male and female CD-1 mice and hepatocellular adenomas increased after 2 years in male F344 rats dosed at 500 ppm (LeBaron et al., 2013, 2014). Nitenpyram significantly increased oesophageal squamous papilloma in male and female rats (Xing et al., 2018). Thiamethoxam induced a dose-related increase of total liver adenoma and adenocarcinoma in male and female Tif:MAGf mice (Green et al., 2005a; Pastoor et al., 2005), but did not induce liver tumours in rats (Green et al., 2005b; Pastoor et al., 2005).

### Mechanistic evidence

Recent studies have shown that neonicotinoids exhibit several KCs. Clothianidin induced DNA single-strand breaks, as seen by an increase in alkaline comet parameters in human bronchial epithelial cells (BEAS-2B). Clothianidin also significantly induced the formation of DNA double strand breaks by increasing phosphorylated H2AX protein foci and p53-binding protein 1 foci. Such DNA damage was not repaired in a 24-hour recovery period. Iturburu et al. (2018) demonstrate that imidacloprid, a neonicotinoid, induces DNA damage in fish, specifically through clastogenesis, a mechanism of genotoxicity. Short-term exposure to environmentally relevant concentrations of imidacloprid led to increased damage to the genetic

integrity of fishes, primarily through oxidative damage to DNA bases. de Moraes et al. (2017) evaluated the mutagenic, recombinogenic, and carcinogenic potential of thiamethoxam, another neonicotinoid, and its formulated product in somatic cells of *Drosophila melanogaster*. Their findings suggest that thiamethoxam and its product exhibit mutagenic effects at high concentrations, indicating a promutagenic potential. Global DNA methylation levels have been shown to be affected in human cell lines exposed to neonicotinoids (Guler et al., 2023). Observed transgenerational effects of neonicotinoids indicate potential long-lasting impact on gene expression across generations (Dali et al., 2023). Global DNA methylation significantly increased after imidacloprid and thiamethoxam exposure in a human neuroblastoma (SH-SY5Y) cell line. Imidacloprid significantly decreased the expression of DNMT1 and DNMT3a genes (Guler et al., 2023). Gestational exposure to thiacloprid affected epigenetic mechanisms controlling meiosis in male mice (Hartman et al., 2021; Dali et al., 2023).

Neonicotinoids induce oxidative stress, leading to cellular damage (Wang et al., 2018b). Ecological or cross-sectional epidemiological studies have reported oxidative genetic damage after exposure to neonicotinoids (Thompson et al., 2020). Exposure to multiple neonicotinoids has been associated with increased oxidative stress and complications such as gestational diabetes mellitus (Mahai et al., 2023). These pesticides exhibit different immunomodulatory effects on human primary cells, potentially exacerbating oxidative stress (Parny et al., 2022). Clothianidin also induced oxidative stress by decreasing levels of reduced GSH and increasing lipid peroxidation (Ath Şekeroğlu et al., 2020). Exposure to chlorpyrifos, dithianon, and captan induced immunomodulatory effects in human primary cells (Parny et al., 2022). Chlorpyrifos, dithianon, and captan inhibited production of ROS and of TNF $\alpha$  and IL-1 $\beta$  pro-inflammatory cytokines in human monocyte-derived macrophages (hMDMs). Dithianon and captan induced mRNA expression of NQO1 and HMOX1 antioxidant enzymes. Dithianon also induced mRNA expression of catalase (CAT) and SOD (Parny et al., 2022). Ma et al. (2023) examined the enantioselective metabolism of a novel chiral neonicotinoid insecticide, paichongding, mediated by human CYP3A4. The results indicated that paichongding stereoisomers exhibit different binding affinities to CYP3A4, with specific interactions dictating their metabolic pathways. The metabolism of paichongding stereoisomers generates various chiral metabolites, some of which possess carcinogenic potential, contributing to adverse effects on human health, such as hepatotoxicity, respiratory toxicity, and carcinogenicity (Ma et al., 2023).

Studies of imidacloprid, clothianidin, acetamiprid, thiacloprid, nitenpyram, and thiamethoxam clearly showed that oxidative stress plays a critical role in their various toxicities (Wang et al., 2018b). In humans, exposure to a mixture of neonicotinoid insecticides was associated with increased odds of gestational diabetes mellitus. A possible mechanism underlying this association may involve oxidative damage to nucleic acids (Mahai et al., 2023). Thiamethoxam induced oxidative stress, as evidenced by the significant increases in malondialdehyde levels and antioxidant enzyme (GST and CAT) activities along with a decrease in GSH levels in rabbits (El Okle et al., 2018). Neonicotinoids can disrupt tight junctions in the intestines, leading to increased intestinal permeability and inflammation (Zhao et al., 2021b). Hepatotoxicity and pro-carcinogenic effects linked to neonicotinoid exposure have been observed in vivo, mediated by oxidative stress, inflammation, and anti-apoptotic pathways (El Okle et al., 2018).

Neonicotinoids may act as endocrine disruptors, affecting hormone levels and contributing to conditions such as obesity and diabetes (Miranda et al., 2023). These pesticides have been shown to affect estrogen receptors and aromatase activity, potentially disrupting hormone signalling pathways (Gea et al., 2022). In a sample representative of the US population, exposure to neonicotinoids was associated with decreased serum testosterone levels in humans (Mendy and Pinney, 2022).

The effect of acetamiprid, clothianidin, and thiamethoxam on estrogen signalling was assessed using a gene reporter assay based on MCF-7 cell lines transfected with the ERE- $\beta$ Glob-Luc-SVNeo plasmid (MELN); no interference with estrogen signalling was detected (Gea et al., 2022). Courjaret and Lapied (2001) studied the regulation of  $\alpha$ -bungarotoxin-resistant nicotinic acetylcholine receptors (nAChRs)

expressed in insect neurosecretory cells. They found that the phosphorylation/dephosphorylation of these receptors strongly affects the action of imidacloprid, implying a potential link between nAChR modulation and carcinogenicity.

Li et al. (2022f) demonstrated that neonicotinoid insecticides promoted breast cancer progression via G protein-coupled estrogen receptor (GPER) pathway. Clothianidin, acetamiprid, and dinotefuran were tested by calcium mobilization assay and all activated GPER. Acetamiprid also induced proliferation of mouse 4T1 breast cancer cells and upregulated GPER expression in a dose-dependent manner. Using a mouse 4T1-Luc (breast) cell orthotopic (implanted into the mammary gland tissue) tumour model, Li et al. (2022f) found that ACE also promoted in-situ breast cancer growth and lung metastasis in normal mouse dependent on GPER. Thiamethoxam upregulated the mRNA levels of IL-6 and BCL2 and down-regulated the mRNA level of TNF $\alpha$ , indicating its effects on cell survival and proliferation through the inhibition of apoptosis (El Okle et al., 2018).

### Summary

There are no studies of cancer in humans related to neonicotinoid insecticides. Carcinogenicity studies in mice and rats exposed to some neonicotinoids reported increases of various tumours in both sexes. There is mechanistic evidence that neonicotinoids can exhibit several of the KCs, in particular genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, and receptor-mediated effects in exposed humans and in experimental systems in vivo and in vitro. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of neonicotinoids to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 135 *para*-Dichlorobenzene (CAS No. 106-47-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*para*-Dichlorobenzene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 73 in 1998 (IARC, 1999b), based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

*para*-Dichlorobenzene (p-DCB) is listed as high production volume chemical by the US EPA (2024a). It is a volatile compound that has been used as a disinfectant and deodorant, for example in air fresheners and moth balls (Cai et al., 2023a). It has also been used in the production of 2,5-dichloroaniline, pharmaceuticals and polyphenylene sulfide resins (IARC, 1999b). It does not occur naturally. Occupational exposure may occur by inhalation or dermally, whereas the general population is mainly exposed via consumer products (e.g. air freshener, moth balls) or air pollution (IARC, 1999b; Heck et al., 2015). The human metabolite 2,5-dichlorophenol (2,5-DCP) has been used as a urinary biomarker of p-DCB exposure (Yoshida et al., 2002a).

### Cancer in humans

Heck et al. (2015) reported an increased risk of retinoblastoma associated with exposure to p-DCB during pregnancy among children in a case-control study in California, USA. Pridgen et al. (2023) used urinary concentrations of the metabolite 2,5-DCP as a proxy of p-DCB exposure in a subsample of women within NHANES. They found increased odds of endocrine-related reproductive cancers associated with higher levels of 2,5-DCP. Another study assessed associations of various health outcomes with urinary concentrations of 2,5-DCP in NHANES and found an increased risk of overall cancer associated with urinary levels of the p-DCB metabolite (Rooney et al., 2019).



### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of *para*-dichlorobenzene (IARC, 1999b).

### Mechanistic evidence

The toxicokinetics of p-DCB in mice and rats were extensively reviewed in Volume 73 of the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 1999b). p-DCB is rapidly absorbed after exposure and distributed in various organs and tissue, especially in adipose tissue, and the major route of excretion is via the urine, where the main metabolite is 2,5-DCP. In seven exposed humans, inhalation toxicokinetics of chronic low-level exposure to p-DCB agreed approximately with the studies in animals, but the fraction of p-DCB excreted in urine 9–11 hours after exposure was much lower in humans (5–16% of the amount absorbed) than in animals (Yoshida et al., 2002b). Thus p-DCB seems to exhibit a long elimination time from the human body. Urinary 2,5-DCP concentrations, leukocyte count, and serum alanine aminotransferase level were higher in exposed than in unexposed workers (Hsiao et al., 2009). Significant associations between urinary 2,5-DCP and metabolic syndrome were observed in large US cohorts (Wei and Zhu, 2016a; Cai et al., 2023a). In addition, urinary 2,5-DCP concentrations were significantly associated with diabetes and insulin resistance in US adults (Wei and Zhu, 2016a) and associated with thyroid dysfunction in US adolescents (Wei and Zhu, 2016b).

In most studies *in vitro* and *in vivo*, p-DCB is not genotoxic (IARC, 1999b; Tegethoff et al., 2000). In mice, p-DCB can induce oxidative stress (Suhua et al., 2010; Henderson et al., 2015). p-DCB induces receptor-mediated effects in mice and rats, having androgenic (Takahashi et al., 2011) and anti-estrogenic (Takahashi et al., 2007) effects and modulating thyroid hormones (den Besten et al., 1991; Elcombe et al., 2002). p-DCB induces cell proliferation in mouse liver and rat kidney (NTP, 1987; IARC, 1999b).

### Summary

Studies have shown sporadic associations between p-DCB exposure and cancer risk. Mechanistic studies in exposed humans show associations between the main urinary metabolite of p-DCB, 2,5-DCP, and endocrine disorders. There is also mechanistic evidence that p-DCB exhibits KCs, including inducing oxidative stress, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and alteration of cell proliferation in experimental systems. However, given the sparse mechanistic evidence in exposed humans and human primary cells, a future classification seems unlikely to change. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *para*-dichlorobenzene is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 136 Pendimethalin (CAS No. 40487-42-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Pendimethalin has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Pendimethalin was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of findings for human cancer, as well as mechanistic evidence related to oxidative stress.

### Exposure characterization

Pendimethalin is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007). It is a selective dinitroaniline herbicide with both crop and non-crop uses. Very little information has been published on occupational exposure to pendimethalin, and no studies were found on levels in the general population. General population exposure to pendimethalin can occur by the oral route through food and other

sources. Occupational exposure can occur by inhalation and dermal contact (US EPA, 1997). Sixteen Italian farmers were sampled during mixing and loading of pesticides and during application to tomatoes cultivated in open fields; the absorbed doses of pendimethalin (234 µg/kg bw) were lower than the acceptable operator exposure level (AOEL) (Aprea et al., 2016).

### **Cancer in humans**

Analyses from the AHS cohort found associations of pendimethalin with rectal but not colon cancer (Hou et al., 2006). There was also evidence of an association between pendimethalin and pancreatic cancer in the AHS (Andreotti et al., 2009). There was a suggestive exposure–response relation between pendimethalin use and lung cancer (Bonner et al., 2017) and renal cell carcinoma (Andreotti et al., 2020). Evaluations for other cancer sites showed no evidence of an association within the cohort. Two studies have evaluated childhood leukaemia associations. The first, a state-wide records-based case–control study showed a suggestive elevation (Nguyen et al., 2023). In the second study, a case–control study of childhood ALL, there was no evidence of an association with house dust concentrations of pendimethalin (Metayer et al., 2013).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Long-term (2-year) studies showed increases in the incidence of thyroid follicular cell adenomas in male and female rats that received a lifetime exposure to pendimethalin in the diet. No evidence of carcinogenicity was noted in two 18-month carcinogenicity studies in mice. Data are summarized in regulatory reports; no primary information is available (US EPA, 1992, 1996b, 1997). No further studies were available.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Pendimethalin has been reported to exhibit KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, chronic inflammation, immunosuppression, and alteration of cell proliferation, cell death or nutrient supply (Hurley, 1998; Ahmad, et al., 2018; IARC, 2019a). More recently, pendimethalin was reported to bind to DNA, specifically by DNA covalent bonds with G and C nitrogenous bases, to intercalate with DNA (Karimi-Maleh et al., 2023) and to induce genotoxicity in human lymphocytes, while inducing apoptosis (Ansari et al., 2018). The agent also caused mutagenicity in the Ames test (Ilyushina et al., 2019). In female rats, exposure to pendimethalin caused DNA damage in the liver that was accompanied by oxidative stress and tissue damage (Gad et al., 2022). In porcine trophectoderm and uterine luminal epithelial cells, exposure to pendimethalin caused disruption of mitochondrial membrane potential, Ca<sup>2+</sup> homeostasis and MAPK signalling through the generation of ROS (Kim et al., 2023). In human umbilical vein endothelial cells, Lee et al. (2022a) observed activation of ER stress-mediated mitochondrial dysfunction leading to apoptosis. Increased thyroid weight, reduced thyroid hormone, and increased TSH levels, accompanied by cellular hypertrophy and hyperplasia were reported in the rat carcinogenicity study (US EPA, 1992). The effects in rodents were previously considered of low relevance to humans (Hurley, 1998). However, two recent studies in humans indicated antithyroid effects of pendimethalin: one reported elevated risk of hypothyroidism in female spouses of private pesticide applicators (Shrestha et al., 2018b) and the other reported that pendimethalin was associated with subclinical hypothyroidism and higher TSH (Lerro et al., 2018a). Pendimethalin is listed in the ToxCast and Tox21 programme and was found to be active in several ER-related and cytokine-related assays, and one ToxCast ER pathway model (US EPA, 2024j).

### **Summary**

The human cancer evidence has shown suggestive associations of pendimethalin with cancer at a few sites. Most analyses were conducted within a large prospective cohort study (the AHS), for which updated findings for colorectal cancer are forthcoming. In two separate case–control studies of childhood leukaemia, one was positive and the other null. Overall, there is some evidence of an increase of benign tumours in

experimental animals. There is some mechanistic evidence that pendimethalin exhibits KCs in experimental systems and in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of pendimethalin to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 137 Proquinazid (CAS No. 189278-12-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Proquinazid has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Proquinazid is a fungicide used in agricultural applications, including on cereals and some fruits; it is classified as a quinazoline, an organoiodine compound and an aromatic ether (PubChem, 2024g). Dietary intake is a source of exposure (Bellisai et al., 2021). No literature on circulating or excreted levels in humans was found.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Two OECD guideline oral chronic toxicity and carcinogenicity studies are summarized in a Draft Assessment Report prepared for EU pesticide registration purposes (ECHA, 2022b). Rats administered proquinazid in feed had increased incidence of thyroid adenomas in males and hepatocellular adenomas and cholangiocarcinoma in females. In CD-1 mice, dietary administration of proquinazid led to increased incidence of benign hepatocellular tumours and HCCs in males and thyroid follicular cell tumours in females.

### Mechanistic evidence

As summarized in the Draft Assessment Report prepared for EU pesticide registration purposes, proquinazid gave negative results in several in vitro and in vivo OECD guideline genotoxicity studies (EFSA, 2009; ECHA, 2022b). No relevant toxicity studies of proquinazid were identified in the open scientific literature. No bioactivity screening data were available from the US EPA ToxCast/Tox21 programmes.

### Summary

No epidemiological studies of cancer in humans were identified. Data are available indicating that proquinazid is carcinogenic in experimental animals. Primary mechanistic data were not identified. The Advisory Group noted that, although the aforementioned evidence in experimental animals comes solely from unpublished studies as summarized in publicly available regulatory assessment documents, all the raw data and other needed information are available in these publicly available reports including annexes. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of proquinazid to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years).

## 138 Tebuconazole (CAS No. 107534-96-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tebuconazole has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Tebuconazole is on the priority list for the JMPR.

### Exposure characterization

Tebuconazole is a triazole fungicide used in the agricultural industry. It is approved for use as a biocide in the European Economic Area for preservation films, wood preservation, and preservation of construction materials. In a study of over 1000 European residents in five countries, tebuconazole was detected in urine in between 5 and 71% of subjects (Ottenbros et al., 2023) with no difference between agricultural and non-agricultural regions. In a recent study from Mexico, around 20% of the 109 avocado farmers included had measurable hydroxy-tebuconazole (a tebuconazole metabolite) in urine samples (Rosa et al., 2024).

### Cancer in humans

A case–control study of childhood leukaemia in the USA using pesticide use data and residential history (Park et al., 2020) found no association with tebuconazole either in the single pesticide model (OR, 1.24; 95% CI, 0.86–1.80) or in the fully adjusted model (OR, 0.80; 95% CI, 0.48–1.32).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In a study in mice given tebuconazole in the diet (reviewed by US EPA, 1993a), a significant increase in the incidence of hepatocellular adenoma, carcinoma, and adenoma or carcinoma (combined) was observed in both males and females.

### Mechanistic evidence

Tebuconazole is structurally related to at least six other triazole fungicides (triadimefon, triadimenol, uniconazole, propiconazole, cyproconazole, and etaconazole) that also produce hepatocellular tumours in male and/or female mice (US EPA, 1993a). Tebuconazole can induce genotoxicity, genomic instability, and DNA damage in human cells in vitro and in experimental systems (Othmène et al., 2021; Barrón Cuenca et al., 2022; Andrioli et al., 2023; Barut et al., 2023). Tebuconazole has been screened in various experimental systems in vivo and in vitro, including the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the H295R steroidogenesis assay in vitro. Tebuconazole significantly altered the production of estradiol and testosterone, showing that it could modulate receptor-mediated effects (Taxvig et al., 2007; Chen et al., 2019c; Singh et al., 2021; Ying et al., 2021; Garnovskaya et al., 2023). Tebuconazole was reported to induce oxidative stress and alter cell proliferation in human colon carcinoma cells (HCT116) (Othmène et al., 2021).

### Summary

Sparse human cancer evidence has shown no association with childhood leukaemia. One carcinogenicity study in mice exposed orally to tebuconazole reported increases in the incidence of hepatocellular tumours in both males and females. Tebuconazole is structurally related to other triazole fungicides that also induce hepatocellular tumours in male and/or female mice. Mechanistic studies on tebuconazole in various models reported that it can be genotoxic, cause genomic instability, modulate receptor-mediated effects and alter cell proliferation. The evidence from cancer bioassays and the mechanistic evidence could contribute to a future Working Group evaluation. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tebuconazole to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 139 Vinclozolin (CAS No. 50471-44-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Vinclozolin has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Vinclozolin was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence of cancer in experimental animal studies and mechanistic evidence (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Vinclozolin is a dicarboximide fungicide that has been commonly used on some fruits, nuts, vines, vegetables, and ornamentals, and as a wood preservative. It was introduced in Germany in 1976 and was listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA in 2023 (US EPA, 2024a). However, use has declined since then due to concerns about anti-androgenic activity. Vinclozolin's authorization was withdrawn in January 2007 in the EU (including the UK), and its use restricted in the USA (Lewis et al, 2016).

Dermal exposure has been measured in workers manufacturing vinclozolin, those picking fruit treated with vinclozolin, and those handling stored chicory (Zweig et al., 1985; Zober et al., 1995; Spanoghe et al., 2010). No studies of general population exposure were found.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In a study of carcinogenicity in C57BL/6 mice, HCCs were observed (JMPR, 1995). The long-term toxicity and carcinogenicity of vinclozolin in rats has recently been investigated in three studies. An increased incidence of Leydig cell tumours was seen in treated rats, together with atrophy of accessory sex glands. Benign sex cord stromal tumours in the ovaries were seen in treated rats, and uterine adenocarcinomas were detected in rats treated at 3000 ppm (the highest dose tested in the carcinogenicity study). Adrenal tumours were also seen in treated rats. HCCs were seen in male rats (JMPR, 1995).

### Mechanistic evidence

Wu et al. (2005) investigated genotoxic effects of vinclozolin in human hepatoma cells, revealing its ability to enhance micronucleus formation when cells were exposed to benzo[a]pyrene (BaP). This enhancement was attributed to an increase in CYP1A1 expression induced by vinclozolin, suggesting a mechanism by which it augments genotoxicity.

In aquatic environments, vinclozolin has been found to exert genotoxic effects on freshwater invertebrates (Aquilino et al., 2018). In *Chironomus riparius* larvae exposed to vinclozolin, a dose-dependent increase in DNA damage was seen, along with alterations in the expression of genes involved in DNA repair and apoptosis. Several studies relevant to other KCs have considered whether vinclozolin induces epigenetic alterations and modulates receptor-mediated effects (Hrelia et al., 1996; Lioi et al., 1998a, b; Skinner, 2016; Pietryk et al., 2018; Maddalon et al., 2023). Exposure to vinclozolin during embryonic gonadal sex determination had profound effects on the epigenome of the male germ line (Skinner and Anway, 2007). This alteration leads to the induction of new imprinted-like genes/DNA sequences, which are transmitted transgenerationally and promote the development of adult-onset diseases, including cancer. Notably, these diseases encompass a spectrum of conditions such as testis abnormalities, prostate disease, kidney disease, immune abnormalities, and tumour development. The transgenerational effects of vinclozolin were elucidated by Nilsson et al. (2018), who found that gestational exposure to vinclozolin induced heritable changes in disease susceptibility across generations of rats. The F3 generation exhibited increased susceptibility to various diseases, including testis, prostate, and kidney diseases, along with

alterations in puberty onset and obesity rates. Epigenetic analysis revealed that different DNA methylation regions were associated with specific diseases, suggesting the potential for epigenetic biomarkers of transgenerational disease susceptibility.

In the 2-year carcinogenicity study, vinclozolin at the dose of 3000 ppm induced Leydig cell hyperplasia, which was accompanied by hepatotoxicity, atrophy of accessory sex glands, atrophic uteri, and lipidosis in the corticomedullary region of the adrenals (JMPR, 1995). Data are available in the ToxCast/Tox21 programme for vinclozolin being active on a series of ToxCast androgen and estrogen pathway models (US EPA, 2024k).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans are available. There is evidence that vinclozolin may induce cancer in experimental animals. The available studies indicate vinclozolin exhibits several KCs, including genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations, modulation of receptor-mediated effects (with transgenerational inheritance of disease susceptibility), and alteration of cell proliferation in experimental systems *in vivo* and *in vitro*. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of vinclozolin to be warranted, on the basis of the cancer bioassay and mechanistic evidence.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 140 Cinidon ethyl (CAS No. 142 891-20-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Cinidon ethyl has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. It was recommended with *low* priority by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Cinidon ethyl is a dicarboximide herbicide with applications on cereal crops (e.g. wheat and rye). No evidence of human exposure was found for this compound.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In an unpublished 2-year study in rats, dietary cinidon ethyl induced tumours of the liver and parathyroid gland (European Commission, 2002b).

### Mechanistic evidence

Only one study was identified for cinidon ethyl (Pasquer et al., 2006).

### Summary

There is a lack of evidence of human exposure to cinidon ethyl, no studies of cancer in humans, and a paucity of other published data. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cinidon ethyl is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 141 1,1-Dimethylhydrazine (CAS No. 57-14-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

1,1-Dimethylhydrazine has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), most recently in Volume 71 (IARC, 1999d), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. 1,1-Dimethylhydrazine was recommended with *low* priority by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “1,1-Dimethylhydrazine is in jet fuel and rocket fuel and is a breakdown product of the plant growth regulator daminozide. In the USA and Europe, daminozide is prohibited for use on food crops but not on ornamental plants, and it appears to be prohibited for use on peanuts in China. Use on mangoes and apples may be allowed some countries (Roy et al., 2018). Exposure to 1,1-dimethylhydrazine results from consumption of the whole fruit and juices and other products made from the treated fruit”.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 1,1-dimethylhydrazine.

### Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic evidence has emerged since the previous evaluation, from animal studies and experimental systems, suggesting electrophilicity, genotoxicity, induction of epigenetic alterations, and immunosuppression. However, these data do not appear to come from exposed humans or human primary cells.

### Summary

The Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of 1,1-dimethylhydrazine is unwarranted at present, given that more mechanistic evidence of KCs from human primary cells or in exposed humans would be needed for a change in classification.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 142 Furmecyclox (CAS No. 60568-05-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Furmecyclox has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Furmecyclox was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Furmecyclox is a furamide fungicide and a wood preservative. Although, as noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, furmecyclox has been listed as a “suspected” or “possible” carcinogen by the ECHA and the US EPA, there is little evidence of exposure. The WHO has listed furmecyclox as an active ingredient believed to be obsolete or discontinued for use as a pesticide (WHO, 2019). No data on exposure were

available to the Advisory Group. No data were found in any of the PubMed searches and almost no references found on Google Scholar.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies on cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “in experimental animals, furmecyclox induced a dose-related increased incidence of neoplastic nodules, carcinomas, and neoplastic nodules or carcinomas (combined) in the liver of female Sprague-Dawley rats and an increased incidence of liver nodules and carcinomas and urothelial tumours of the bladder in male Sprague-Dawley rats (US EPA, 1988).”

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Apart from a few negative tests in mentioned in the EPA report, no mechanistic studies were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Summary**

Although there is a positive animal bioassay, there is a lack of evidence of current or past human exposure. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of furmecyclox is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **143 *ortho*-Benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol (CAS No. 120-32-1)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

*ortho*-Benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. It was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of weak evidence for cancer in experimental animals and for genotoxicity.

### **Exposure characterization**

*ortho*-Benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “*o*-Benzyl-*p*-chlorophenol is used as a broad-spectrum biocide in cleaning solutions and disinfectants in hospitals and households for general cleaning and disinfecting. Its use is widespread. Human exposure to *o*-benzyl-*p*-chlorophenol occurs by absorption through the skin and mucous membranes and by ingestion. From the National Occupational Exposure Survey 1981–1983 (NIOSH, 1983), the US NIOSH has statistically estimated that 347 634 workers (244 212 of them female) were potentially exposed to *o*-benzyl-*p*-chlorophenol in the USA (NCBI, 2024h). Occupational exposure to *o*-benzyl-*p*-chlorophenol may occur through dermal contact with this compound at workplaces where it is produced or used. The general population may be exposed to *o*-benzyl-*p*-chlorophenol through dermal exposure when using this compound as a household disinfectant.”

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Toxicity and carcinogenicity studies were conducted by administering *ortho*-benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol (approximately 97% pure) in corn oil by gavage to male and female F344/N rats and B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice for



16 days, 13 weeks, or 2 years (NTP, 1994a). Clinical pathology parameters were evaluated during the 2-year study in rats. No increase in tumours was seen in male F344/N rats that received 30, 60 or 120 mg/kg bw for 2 years or in female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice that received 120, 240, or 480 mg/kg bw for 2 years (NTP, 1994a). In male B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice, the incidence of renal tubule adenoma and renal tubule adenoma or carcinoma (combined) was increased.

In a further NTP study, it was reported that *ortho*-benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol was a cutaneous irritant and a weak skin tumour promoter in a 1-year skin initiation/promotion study in Swiss (CD-1) mice (NTP, 1995a). When 0.1, 1.0, or 3.0 mg dissolved in acetone were applied 3 days per week for 20 weeks, the agent induced skin tumours (papilloma) in Tg.AC mice only at the highest dose (Spalding et al., 1999). A similar dose regimen was used for the NTP's 1-year skin painting study in CD-1 mice (NTP, 1995a).

### Mechanistic evidence

Genetic toxicity studies were conducted in various test systems. In tests performed with and without exogenous metabolic activation, *ortho*-benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol did not induce gene mutations in various *S. typhimurium* strains (TA98, TA100, TA1535, or TA1537) and did not induce SCE or chromosomal aberrations in cultured CHO cells (NTP, 1995b). However, positive results were obtained in gene mutation tests conducted with mouse L5178Y lymphoma cells and human TK6 lymphoblast cells in the absence of S9 (NTP, 1995b). *ortho*-Benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol was not genotoxic in studies in vivo: no lethal mutations were observed in the dominant lethal mouse assay and no micronucleus formation was observed in the bone marrow of mice (as reviewed by Stouten and Bessems, 1998). Toxcast data show active hits for KC5, KC8, KC10 (US EPA, 2024l).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans are available for *ortho*-benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol. There have been a few carcinogenicity studies in rodents conducted by NTP, a study of initiation/promotion in CD-1 mice and another 1-year study in transgenic mice, reporting weak evidence of promotion but not complete carcinogenicity effects. Few studies are available for the KCs, mainly related to genotoxicity and modulation of receptor-mediated effects. However, the few genotoxicity studies available in the NTP report indicated no genotoxicity of the agent. Other studies in vivo, reporting negative findings but with no primary data, were only summarized in a review of unpublished industry regulatory study reports. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *ortho*-benzyl-*para*-chlorophenol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 144 2,4-Diaminotoluene (CAS No. 95-80-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,4-Diaminotoluene (2,4-DAT) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). The IPCS has published a report on health effects of 2,4-DAT (WHO, 1987).

### Exposure characterization

2,4-DAT is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). 2,4-DAT is used mainly to produce 2,4-toluene diisocyanate, which is a reagent in the manufacture of polyurethanes that are widely used in plastics and synthetic fibres (NTP, 2021a). 2,4-DAT has also been used to produce dyes, with a peak in production in the 1970s.

Occupational exposure might occur in the production and use of 2,4-DAT. 2,4-Toluene diisocyanate and the polymers for which it is used can be metabolized to 2,4-DAT (Lind et al., 1996; Luu et al., 1998). Therefore, workers might be exposed internally after inhalation and metabolism of these compounds (NTP, 2021a). Release of 2,4-DAT into the environment might lead to exposure of the general population through air and water (NTP, 2021a). Surgical implants covered with polyurethane coatings such as breast implants or pacemakers are another potential exposure source (Luu et al., 1998), as are consumer products and materials containing polyurethane in contact with food (Wang and Chen, 2009).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 2,4-DAT.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

2,4-DAT forms DNA adducts in vitro and in vivo (Furlong et al., 1987; Citro et al., 1993; La and Froines, 1994; Delclos et al., 1996; Wilson et al., 1996). 2,4-DAT appeared to be genotoxic in a reconstructed 3D human epidermal skin model (Reus et al., 2013) and in the human hepatoma cell line HepG2 (Séverin et al., 2005), but not in HepaRG 3D spheroids or 2D cell cultures (liver models) (Mandon et al., 2019). In rats, 2,4-DAT induces DNA damage (Sasaki et al., 1997b; Narumi et al., 2012; De Boeck et al., 2015) and mutations (Toyoda-Hokaiwado et al., 2010) in the liver. 2,4-DAT is mutagenic in the Ames test (Shahin et al., 1985; Cunningham and Matthews, 1990; Cheung et al., 1996) and induces chromosomal aberrations in CHO cells (Bean et al., 1992). Occupational exposure to 2,4-DAT did not induce asthma in workers exposed to polyurethane foams (Candura and Moscato, 1984), and 2,4-DAT did not act as a respiratory sensitizer in mice (Vanoirbeek et al., 2009). Perturbation of the immune system in mice exposed to 2,4-DAT was observed (Burns et al., 1994). Reduced serum testosterone levels were measured in male rats with other signs associated with reproductive toxicity (Thysen et al., 1985a, b), although no reproductive toxic effects were found in exposed male workers (Hamill et al., 1982). Cell proliferation was increased in rat and mouse livers and other organs after chronic exposure to 2,4-DAT (NTP, 1979; Cunningham and Matthews, 1995).

### **Summary**

No studies in humans on the carcinogenicity of 2,4-DAT were available. There is mechanistic information showing that 2,4-DAT exhibits KCs: it is genotoxic, forms DNA adducts and increases cell proliferation in experimental systems. However, no data relative to the key characteristics in exposed humans or in human primary cells or tissues are available. A few studies have reported that 2,4-DAT is immunosuppressive in mice and modulates receptor-mediated effects in male rats. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2,4-diaminotoluene is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **145 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine (CAS No. 119-90-4) (ortho-dianisidine, CI Disperse Black 6)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine (*ortho*-dianisidine, CI Disperse Black 6) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### Exposure characterization

3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine is an aromatic amine that is used as an intermediate in the production of various dyes and pigments for colouring of paper, textiles, leather, plastic, and rubber (NTP, 2021a). It is also used in the production of *ortho*-dianisidine diisocyanate for the manufacture of plastics and adhesives. The use of azo dyes that can yield 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine when they decompose is banned or restricted for textiles and cosmetics in the EU, where it is mainly used for small-scale laboratory applications (European Commission, 2002c). Production and use have declined in Europe and the USA since the 1990s (IARC, 2010a) and little information is available on current levels of use and human exposure. Occupational exposure, mainly via inhalation or dermal contact, is expected in contexts where use has not been restricted. The general public might be exposed via consumer products that contain 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine as a trace contaminant or in settings where the use of dyes containing 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine or metabolized to 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine have not been banned.

### Cancer in humans

Workers exposed to 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine and other azo dyes had elevated risk of bladder cancer (Ouellet-Hellstrom and Rench, 1996). However, no studies on human cancer that could single out exposure to 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine in experimental animals. 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine produced tumours in rats at various sites, including the bladder, intestine, skin, and Zymbal gland; it induced forestomach papillomas in hamsters. In addition, 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine dihydrochloride carcinogenicity was confirmed in the toxicity and carcinogenicity studies as part of the NTP's Benzidine Dye Initiative (NTP, 1990). This initiative was designed to evaluate benzidine congeners and benzidine congener-derived and benzidine-derived dyes (NTP, 1990; Morgan et al., 1994).

### Mechanistic evidence

3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine is listed by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment as causing cancer (OEHHA, 2024) and as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen” by the NTP RoC (NTP, 1990). 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine is structurally similar to benzidine, a Group 1 carcinogen (IARC, 1972, 2012b). The metabolic conversion of 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine to carcinogenic aromatic amines has been observed in experimental systems (Lynn et al., 1980) and humans (Lowry et al., 1980). There is evidence in experimental systems that 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine is genotoxic. It was mutagenic in *S.typhimurium* and induced UDS in rat hepatocyte primary cultures (NTP, 1990). 3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine dihydrochloride was mutagenic in *Salmonella* and induced SCE and chromosomal aberrations in mammalian cells in vitro (NTP, 1990). These findings, coupled with the observed mutagenic activity of several metabolites of 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine and structurally similar compounds (NTP, 1990), are strongly suggestive that a genotoxic mode of action is operative. In addition, DNA damage was observed in primary cells from liver and urinary bladder rats and humans (Martelli et al., 2000). Data from high-throughput screening assays in vitro suggested that the chemical may modulate receptor-mediated effects (Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021).

In a recent evaluation of aromatic amines (IARC, 2021) aniline, *ortho*-anisidine and *ortho*-nitroanisole were classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) on the basis of *strong* mechanistic evidence. In view of the metabolism and mechanistic considerations for all three agents, they were classified on the basis of belonging to a class of aromatic amines for which several members (i.e. 4-aminobiphenyl, 2-naphthylamine, and *ortho*-toluidine) have been classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (IARC Group 1). These

agents were similar to this class of aromatic amines with respect to the formation of common DNA-reactive moieties, genotoxicity, and target organs of carcinogenicity in animal bioassays for chronic toxicity. Thus, it could be expected that 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine could also belong to this same class.

### Summary

No studies on human cancer that could single out exposure 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine were available. There is already *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. There is evidence that 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine exhibits KCs. In addition, the metabolism, genotoxicity, and carcinogenicity in experimental animals provide strong evidence that 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine belongs to the same mechanistic class as other aromatic amines previously classified by IARC in Groups 1 or 2A. This evidence could support a change in the classification of 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine to be warranted, together with 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine (agent 146).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 146 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine (CAS No. 119-93-7) (*ortho*-tolidine)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine (*ortho*-tolidine) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### Exposure characterization

3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine is an aromatic amine that is used as an intermediate in the production of various dyes and pigments for colouring of paper, textiles, leather, plastic, and rubber (NTP, 2021a). It is also used in the production of polyurethanes as a curing agent. The use of azo dyes that can yield 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine when they decompose is banned or restricted for textiles and cosmetics in the EU (European Commission, 2002c), where it is mainly used for small-scale, laboratory applications. Production and use have declined in Europe and the USA since the 1990s (IARC, 2010a) and little information is available on current levels of use and human exposure. Occupational exposure, mainly via inhalation or dermal contact, is expected in contexts where use has not been banned. The general public might be exposed via consumer products that contain 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine as a trace contaminant or in settings where the use of dyes containing 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine or dyes metabolized to 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine have not been banned.

### Cancer in humans

Studies of workers exposed to 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine and other azo dyes have shown elevated risk of bladder cancer (Ouellet-Hellstrom and Rench, 1996). However, no studies on human cancer that could single out exposure to 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine. In addition, carcinogenicity of 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine dihydrochloride was confirmed in 2-year carcinogenicity and toxicity studies as part of the NTP's Benzidine Dye Initiative. This initiative was designed to evaluate benzidine congeners and benzidine congener-derived and benzidine-derived dyes (NTP, 1990; Morgan et al., 1994).

### Mechanistic evidence

The NTP RoC lists 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen” based on *sufficient* evidence for cancer in animals (NTP, 1990). 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine is listed as causing cancer by the California Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment (OEHHA, 2024). 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine is structurally similar to benzidine, a well-known Group 1 agent (IARC, 1972, 2012b). Although little information is available on the metabolism of 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine, there is evidence showing metabolic conversion to carcinogenic aromatic amines in experimental systems (Lynn et al., 1980; Cerniglia et al., 1982b) and humans (Cerniglia et al., 1982a; Golka et al., 2004). There is evidence from experimental systems that 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine dihydrochloride is genotoxic. 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine was mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* strain TA98 with exogenous metabolic activation; it was not mutagenic in strains TA100, TA1535, or TA97 with or without activation. 3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine dihydrochloride induced SCE and chromosomal aberrations in CHO cells only in the absence of exogenous metabolic activation. Sex-linked recessive lethal mutations were induced in germ cells of adult male *Drosophila melanogaster* given 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine dihydrochloride in the feed or by injection. No reciprocal translocations occurred in *D. melanogaster* germ cells following exposure to 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine dihydrochloride (NTP, 1991). In addition, data from high-throughput screening assays in vitro suggested that the chemical may modulate receptor-mediated effects (Judson et al., 2015; Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021).

In a recent evaluation of aromatic amines (IARC, 2021) aniline, *ortho*-anisidine and *ortho*-nitroanisole were classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) on the basis of *strong* mechanistic evidence. In view of the metabolism and mechanistic considerations for all three agents, they were classified on the basis of belonging to a class of aromatic amines for which several members (i.e. 4-aminobiphenyl, 2-naphthylamine, and *ortho*-toluidine) have been classified as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1). These agents were similar to this class of aromatic amines with respect to the formation of common DNA-reactive moieties, genotoxicity, and target organs of carcinogenicity in animal bioassays for chronic toxicity. Thus, it could be expected that 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine could also belong to this same class.

### Summary

No studies on human cancer that could single out exposure to 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine were available. There is evidence that 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine exhibits KCs. In addition, the metabolism, genotoxicity, and carcinogenicity in experimental animals provide strong evidence that 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine belongs to the same mechanistic class as other aromatic amines previously classified by IARC in Groups 1 or 2A. This evidence could support a change in the classification of 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 3,3'-dimethylbenzidine to be warranted, together with 3,3'-dimethoxybenzidine (agent 145).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 147 5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine (CAS No. 99-55-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 48 in 1989 (IARC, 1990b).

### Exposure characterization

5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine has been used as an intermediate in the synthesis of Pigment Red 17 and Pigment Red 22. It has also been used as a precursor in the synthesis of a wide assortment of azo dyes of various red,

yellow, orange, violet, and brown hues (IARC, 1990b). Data for occupational and non-occupational exposure to 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine were not available, but because the compound is used in the synthesis of pigments, it is presumed that exposures can occur.

### **Cancer in humans**

No human cancer studies were available in the previous IARC evaluation (IARC, 1990b). Since then, no studies of cancer in humans have been published.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine was tested for carcinogenicity in both rats and mice by oral administration. In mice, it caused HCCs in both sexes, an increase in the incidence of haemangiomas and haemangiosarcomas (combined) in male mice, and an increased incidence of haemangiosarcomas in female mice. The compound was not considered to be carcinogenic in rats (NTP, 1978).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine tested positive for genotoxicity in two assay systems: mammalian cell cytogenetics and bacterial mutagenicity (NTP, 2023h). 5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine exposure in rats led to haemoglobin adduct formation (Zwirner-Baier et al., 1994). 5-Nitro-*ortho*-toluidine was screened as part of the US EPA ToxCast programme and found to be active in several nuclear hormone receptor assays in human cell lines, including the androgen and progesterone receptors AHR and RXR (US EPA, 2024c).

### **Summary**

No human cancer studies were available for 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine. Available data indicate that 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine is carcinogenic in experimental animals, according to the criteria in the latest version of the *IARC Monographs* Preamble. There is some evidence that 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine exhibits KCs, in particular genotoxicity and receptor-mediated effects in experimental systems. These data could support an evaluation of 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine by a *Monographs* Working Group. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 5-nitro-*ortho*-toluidine to be warranted, together with other azo dyes included in this report.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **148 Congo red (CAS No. 573-58-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Congo red has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Congo red is one of the common names for disodium 3,3'-[[1,1'-biphenyl]-4,4'-diylbis(azo)]bis(4-aminonaphthalene-1-sulfonate). It is a synthetic azo dye previously used in textiles, tanneries, cosmetics, pigments, and the food, pharmaceutical, pulp, paper and printing industries (Harja et al., 2022), but it is unclear to what extent it is still used in these industries. Congo red is used for histological staining to detect amyloid structures (Yakupova et al., 2019).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

There is evidence that Congo red is metabolized to benzidine (Reid et al., 1983; Victor et al., 2020). Benzidine and dyes metabolized to benzidine are classified in as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) by IARC (1987a; 2012b). Concerning Congo red, there is evidence for hepatocarcinogenesis of similar dyes (Direct Blue 6, Direct Black 38, and Direct Brown 95, all derived from benzidine) in rats from a subchronic study (Robens et al., 1980; ECHA, 2013). In fact, much of the evidence comes from similar dyes or benzidine with the assumption of similar action and this has led to the hypothesis of their carcinogenicity (Siddiqui et al., 2023). Mutagenicity has been studied, since the benzidine metabolite is a mutagen. The Ames test shows mutagenicity of Congo red in the presence of hamster S9 (azoreduction necessary) (Reid et al., 1983). In vivo, DNA adducts were found in rat liver (intraperitoneal injection) that were similar to benzidine-related adducts. Azo reduction probably occurs in the gut microflora (Reid et al., 1983; Siddiqui et al., 2023).

### Summary

No studies in humans regarding the carcinogenicity of Congo red are available. Congo red is metabolized by microflora in the gut to benzidine and derivatives, which form DNA adducts in the liver. There is some mechanistic evidence that Congo red exhibits KCs, and its metabolism to benzidine suggests that it could belong in Group 1 as part of the agent “dyes metabolized to benzidine”. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of Congo red to be warranted, together with other benzidine-related dyes.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 149 Ethyl anthranilate (CAS No. 87-25-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Ethyl anthranilate has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The JECFA conducted a limited assessment of ethyl anthranilate in 2005 and concluded that there is no safety concern at current levels of intake when used as a flavouring agent (TRS 934-JECFA 65/54).

### Exposure characterization

Ethyl anthranilate, a flavouring agent found naturally in citrus fruits, grapes, and starfruit, is used in the food industry. It is used to enhance flavours in a variety of products, including alcoholic and non-alcoholic beverages, baked goods, chewing gum, frozen dairy, gelatin, puddings, and hard and soft candies. In addition to its role in the food industry, ethyl anthranilate is employed in perfumery and as a fragrance component in various consumer products. It also serves as an inert ingredient in pesticides, indicating its use in agricultural applications (Api et al., 2015; NCBI, 2024a). Occupational dermal exposure may occur in workers in production or industrial settings that utilize ethyl anthranilate. General population exposure includes dietary ingestion of ethyl anthranilate-containing foods and potential dermal contact with consumer products containing the compound (NCBI, 2024a). Total systemic exposure (dermal and inhalation) was estimated at 0.0013 mg/kg per day (Api et al., 2015).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Results on genotoxicity of ethyl anthranilate appear to be negative, from studies by the NTP and the Research Institute for Fragrance Materials (RIFM) (NTP, 1986a; Api et al., 2015). A read-across study using anthranilic acid and methyl anthranilate did not show potential genotoxic effects (Api et al., 2015). However, there are several issues to consider. Anthranilic acid is a metabolite of ethyl anthranilate. The Advisory Group considered that the Ames test may not have been adequate, as the activation of aromatic amines requires phase II biotransformation.

Another anthranilate (cinnamyl anthranilate) shows some effects in experimental animals: hepatocarcinoma in mice and non-statistically significant tumours in various locations in rats (NCI, 1980; Viswalingam and Caldwell, 1997; IARC, 2000; Klaunig et al., 2003). Cinnamyl anthranilate is a PPAR $\alpha$  agonist (IARC, 2000) and it is known that rodents are much more sensitive to PPAR $\alpha$  agonists than primates (Klaunig et al., 2003); thus, the human relevance of such findings is questionable. Anthranilic acid and cinnamyl anthranilate have been classified as Group 3 by the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 1978, 1987a, 2000).

### **Summary**

There is no evidence on cancer in humans or in experimental animals and largely negative mechanistic evidence. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ethyl anthranilate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **150 Menthyl anthranilate (CAS No. 134-09-8)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Menthyl anthranilate has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Menthyl anthranilate, primarily known for its function as an absorber of ultraviolet radiation (UVR), is an ingredient in cosmetic and personal care products, particularly in products that offer protection from UVR, for example in sunscreen products and in lip balms (NCBI, 2024b). It is approved for this purpose in the USA but not in Europe or Japan (EWG, 2024; US EPA 2024d). Occupational dermal exposure may occur in workers in production or industrial settings that use menthyl anthranilate. General population exposure includes dermal contact with consumer products containing the compound. However, there is a lack of studies on the degree of dermal penetration and consumer exposure.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There are very few mechanistic studies of menthyl anthranilate. This compound may have possible pro-oxidant and antioxidant effects in cellular studies (Hofer et al., 2018). It was recently suggested to induce photoallergic contact dermatitis (Battis et al. 2023).



## Summary

There is no evidence on cancer in humans or experimental animals and largely negative mechanistic evidence. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of methyl anthranilate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 151 Methyl anthranilate (CAS No. 134-20-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Methyl anthranilate has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The JECFA conducted a limited assessment of methyl anthranilate in 2005 and concluded that the acceptable daily intake (ADI) established at the 23rd meeting was to be maintained (TRS 934-JECFA 65/54).

### Exposure characterization

Methyl anthranilate is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (OECD, 2007; US EPA, 2024a). The annual volume of production and importation in the European Economic Area is reported to be 100–1000 tonnes per year (ECHA, 2023e).

Methyl anthranilate, widely recognized as a fragrance and flavouring agent, is extensively used in various consumer and industrial products. It is commonly found in foods, personal care items, air fresheners, polishes, waxes, and cleaning products. Additionally, it serves as a pest repellent, particularly in agricultural settings, leading to potential occupational exposure for workers. It is present in essential oils such as neroli, ylang-ylang, bergamot, and jasmine, as well as in grape juice. Exposure to methyl anthranilate can occur through oral, dermal, and inhalation routes. The total systemic 95th percentile exposure via dermal, oral and inhalation routes when used as fragrance ingredient was estimated as 0.0013 mg/kg per day (Api et al., 2017; ECHA, 2023e; NCBI, 2024c).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

A single study did not reveal increased incidence of tumours in mice (Stoner et al., 1973).

### Mechanistic evidence

Results on genotoxicity of methyl anthranilate appear to be negative, from studies by the NTP and RIFM (NTP, 2024c; Api et al., 2017). Anthranilic acid, a metabolite of methyl anthranilate (Yamaori et al., 2005), was not found to be genotoxic (Gadupudi and Chung, 2011). However, the Advisory Group noted that the tests may not have been completely adequate, as activation of aromatic amines requires phase II biotransformation.

Another anthranilate (cinnamyl anthranilate) showed positive effects in animal tests: hepatocarcinoma in mice and non-statistically significant tumours in various locations in rats (Viswalingam and Caldwell, 1997; IARC, 2000; Klaunig et al., 2003; NCBI, 2024c). Cinnamyl anthranilate is a PPAR $\alpha$  agonist (IARC 2000), and it is known that rodents are much more sensitive to PPAR $\alpha$  agonists than primates (Klaunig et al., 2003); thus, the human relevance of such findings is questionable. Both anthranilic acid and cinnamyl anthranilate have been classified as Group 3 by the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 1978, 1987a, 2000).

## Summary

There is no evidence on cancer in humans or experimental animals and largely negative mechanistic evidence. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of methyl anthranilate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 152 *ortho*-Aminoazotoluene (CAS No. 97-6-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*ortho*-Aminoazotoluene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### Exposure characterization

*ortho*-Aminoazotoluene has been used to colour oils, fats, and waxes (IARC, 1975). It is also used as a chemical intermediate for the production of the dyes CI Solvent Red 24 and CI Acid Red 115 (HSDB, 2009). It also has a wide range of applications in the laboratory, including as a reagent for the synthesis of a variety of compounds including azo dyes, polymers, and pharmaceuticals. Additionally, it is used in the production of nitrobenzene and other nitro compounds (BenchChem, 2023).

The primary routes of human exposure to *ortho*-aminoazotoluene are dermal absorption and inhalation (NTP, 2021a). It is not used directly in foods, drugs, or cosmetics, so exposure of the general population through consumer products is not likely (IARC, 1975; NTP, 2021a). Occupational exposure may occur through inhalation of dust or by dermal contact during production, formulation or use of *ortho*-aminoazotoluene (HSDB, 2009; NTP, 2021a). The National Occupational Exposure Survey (conducted by NIOSH from 1981 to 1983) estimated that 1449 workers were potentially exposed (in the chemicals and allied products and the transportation equipment industries); none of these workers were women (NIOSH, 1990a).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1975), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of *ortho*-aminoazotoluene. It caused tumours in several species of experimental animals, at several different tissue sites, and by several different routes of exposure (IARC, 1975; NTP, 2021a). Since the previous evaluation, *ortho*-aminoazotoluene given by gavage was found to rapidly induce colonic adenocarcinoma in mice after treatment with dextran sulfate sodium (Hakura et al., 2022).

### Mechanistic evidence

*ortho*-Aminoazotoluene induced epithelial hyperplasia in human embryonic lung and kidney tissues (Shabad et al., 1975). It induced gene mutations in the liver and colon in lambda/lacZ transgenic mice (Ohsawa et al., 2000; Kohara et al., 2001). Severe inflammatory infiltration and proliferation of oval cells were found in liver tissue of mice treated with *ortho*-aminoazotoluene (Baginskaya et al., 2007). An immunosuppressive action was observed in DD mice after a single injection of *ortho*-aminoazotoluene (Kaledin et al., 1978). It gave positive results in the Ames test (Zeiger et al., 1992; Ohsawa et al., 2000; Ovchinnikova et al., 2013). Urothelial hyperplasia was observed in rats after oral administration of *ortho*-aminoazotoluene (Toyoda et al., 2023). *ortho*-Aminoazotoluene has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay and was found

to cause cells to significantly increase production of estradiol and progesterone. It was one of the most potent inducers of estrogen and progesterone synthesis screened in the assay (Cardona and Rudel, 2021). It was also screened for evidence of activity at the estrogen receptor using a computational model that integrates the concentration–response results from 18 in vitro assays that measure activity related to the ER pathway. According to this model, which is now the EPA’s preferred method for identifying ER agonists, this chemical is significantly ER agonistic (Judson et al., 2015; Haggard et al., 2018; Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans were available. There is already *sufficient* evidence that *ortho*-aminoazotoluene causes cancer in experimental animals, at various tissue sites and by several different routes of exposure. Several studies have shown evidence of multiple KCs in experimental systems. However, the lack of new studies in human primary cells or tissues or in exposed humans suggests that an updated evaluation would not lead to a change in classification. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *ortho*-aminoazotoluene is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 153 *para*-Cresidine (CAS No. 120-71-8) (2-methoxy-5-methylaniline)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*para*-Cresidine (*p*-cresidine, 2-methoxy-5-methylaniline) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### Exposure characterization

*para*-Cresidine is used exclusively as a synthetic chemical intermediate to produce azo dyes and pigments. The dyes made with *para*-cresidine have been produced commercially and are used in the food and textile industries (NCI, 1979c, NTP 2021a; IARC, 1982). *para*-Cresidine has been identified as a contaminant in FD&C red dye No. 40, which is used in gelatins, puddings, dairy products, confections, beverages, and condiments (Richfield-Fratz et al., 1989; Food Additives World, 2006).

The routes of potential human exposure to *para*-cresidine are inhalation, ingestion, and dermal contact (HSDB, 2009; NTP, 2021a). Measurements of *para*-cresidine in a longitudinal biomonitoring study involving 15 participants residing in the USA suggested that the sources of exposure were not related to tobacco smoke (Chinthakindi and Kannan, 2022). In a study analysing primary aromatic amines in 256 house dust samples collected from 10 countries, *para*-cresidine was one of the more prevalent (Chinthakindi and Kannan, 2021). Occupational exposure to *para*-cresidine may occur through inhalation and dermal contact at workplaces where *para*-cresidine is produced or used (HSDB, 2009).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals, on the basis of the bioassay conducted by NCI (1979c) that evaluated carcinogenicity of *para*-cresidine in F344 rats and B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice. Since that evaluation, new studies have been published. In a study by Petruska et al. (2002) in p53-heterozygous mice, *para*-cresidine administered at a dose of 400 mg/kg bw for 26 weeks showed bladder epithelial cell carcinomas, SCCs, and transitional epithelial

hyperplasia and metaplasia in both males and females. There was also a report of urinary bladder leiomyosarcoma in female mice treated with *para*-cresidine. Transitional cell carcinoma of the urinary bladder was reported in female BK5.IGF-1 TG transgenic mice fed 0.5% *para*-cresidine in the diet (Hursting et al., 2009).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There is evidence that *para*-cresidine is mutagenic in experimental systems. Sasaki et al. (1998) observed significant DNA damage in tissues of mice fed *para*-cresidine at 595 mg/kg bw for 3 hours and 24 hours. In mice and rats exposed to either oral administration or intraperitoneal injection of *para*-cresidine, UDS, DNA strand breaks, and micronucleus induction were reported (Ashby et al., 1991). BK5.IGF-1 TG mice with urothelial IGF-1 overexpression were more susceptible to *para*-cresidine-induced bladder cancer (Hursting et al., 2009). The agent has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay and was found to cause cells to significantly increase production of progesterone (Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024).

### **Summary**

No studies of cancer in humans were available. There is already *sufficient* evidence that *para*-cresidine causes cancer in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence that *para*-cresidine exhibits KCs, mainly genotoxicity, in experimental systems. However, the lack of evidence in human primary cells or tissues or in exposed humans suggests that an updated evaluation would not lead to a change in classification for *para*-cresidine. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of *para*-cresidine is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **154 *para*-Phenylenediamine (CAS No. 106-50-3) (1,4-benzenediamine)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

*para*-Phenylenediamine (*p*-phenylenediamine, 1,4-benzenediamine) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a).

### **Exposure characterization**

*para*-Phenylenediamine is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). *para*-Phenylenediamine is an aniline derivative that is widely used as a dye intermediate and as a photographic developing agent, as an antioxidant and accelerator, and in the production of rubber and of some polymers such as kevlar (US EPA, 2000a; NCBI, 2024d).

*para*-Phenylenediamine and other arylamines or *para*-aminophenols are used as primary intermediates in permanent hair dyes (IARC, 2010a). These compounds are oxidized and react with couplers in or on the hair to form the final hair dye after another oxidation step. Hair dyes usually contain a mix of different couplers and intermediates and a range of concentrations to achieve the specific tone. Colourant concentrations below 1% or in the low per cent range are applied. For hairdressers and barbers, occupational exposure occurs mainly via inhalation, whereas exposure during personal use of hair dyes is mainly via the dermal route (IARC, 2010a). Occupational exposure during the uses of *para*-phenylenediamine other than as hair dyes is expected to occur but is poorly documented. Consumer exposure due to the illegal addition of *para*-phenylenediamine to non-permanent henna tattoo colours has been documented (Jacob and Brod, 2011; Krüger et al., 2013).

## Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

## Cancer in experimental animals

In rats treated subcutaneously with *para*-phenylenediamine at 12 mg/kg bw, fibrosarcoma was observed 7 months after administration of the agent (Saruta et al., 1958). Another study reported no carcinogenic effects in either sex in F344 rats treated with *para*-phenylenediamine for 80 weeks (Imaida et al., 1983). Dermal exposure of female Wistar rats to *para*-phenylenediamine induced mammary gland tumours and subcutaneous injection induced uterine tumours and soft-tissue tumours, whereas tumours of the thyroid, adrenal gland, liver, lung, and urinary bladder were observed in male rats (Rojanapo et al., 1986).

## Mechanistic evidence

Although *para*-phenylenediamine by itself has been shown to be non-mutagenic, an oxidation product of *para*-phenylenediamine had mutagenic effects when tested on *S. typhimurium* TA98 (Rojanapo et al., 1986). *para*-Phenylenediamine has been reported to induce apoptosis in melanoma cells in mice (Bhowmick et al., 2016). Inflammatory response is elicited (induction of several interleukins and cytokines) in *para*-phenylenediamine-treated mice (Van Belle et al., 2019). However, this response represents acute contact dermatitis and its relevance to carcinogenicity is not clear. Kasi et al. (2015) reported that *para*-phenylenediamine induces apoptosis via alteration of JNK and Akt cell signalling pathways which are implicated in carcinogenesis. The agent was active in a series of assays linked to KC2, KC5, KC8, and KC10 (ToxCast data, analysed with the software “KC-hits”, key characteristics of carcinogens, high-throughput screening discovery tool; Reisfeld et al., 2022), and it was reported to highly increase estradiol levels specifically in the in vitro steroidogenesis assay (Cardona and Rudel, 2021).

## Summary

No studies on human cancer were available. There is evidence that *para*-phenylenediamine induces cancer in experimental animals. There is some mechanistic evidence suggesting that *para*-phenylenediamine exhibits several KCs, including genotoxicity in experimental animals. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *para*-phenylenediamine to be warranted. This agent should be evaluated in the same volume as hair dyes (agent 157).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 155 4-Nitrotoluene (CAS No. 99-99-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

4-Nitrotoluene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 65 in 1995 (IARC, 1996). 4-Nitrotoluene was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities, on the basis of its similarity to *ortho*-toluidine (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

4-Nitrotoluene, also known as *para*-nitrotoluene, is an organic compound that is a solid at room temperature. 4-Nitrotoluene is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (OECD, 2007; US EPA, 2024a). It is used as an intermediate in the production of dyes, agricultural and rubber chemicals and explosives (NIH, 2024b). It is also used in the production of medications including *para*-aminobenzoic acid, benzocaine, procaine hydrochloride, thioacetazone and folic acid (NIH, 2024b).

Air concentrations in a factory manufacturing dinitrotoluene and 2,4,6-trinitrotoluene were well below the US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) permissible exposure limit and UK occupational 8-hour TWA exposure limits set at 11 mg/m<sup>3</sup> (Jones et al., 2005). However, previous smaller studies had suggested that dermal exposure was more important than inhalational exposure in relation to nitrotoluenes generally (Levine et al., 1985; Woollen et al., 1985).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In an NTP study conducted under GLP, there was an increase in bronchioloalveolar adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in male mice (NTP, 2002). In rats, there was a modest increase in the incidence of clitoral gland adenoma or carcinoma (combined) in females, and slight increases in the incidence of subcutaneous skin fibroma or fibrosarcoma (combined) in males. When actual data were examined (NTP, 2002), there was a clear increase at intermediate doses and no increase at the highest dose. The conclusion of the NTP report was “equivocal evidence” because of the dose–response curve pattern. However, the Advisory Group noted that positive findings in male and female rats and in male mice were described in a well-conducted GLP study (NTP, 2002) and suggested furthermore that the non-monotonic dose–response should not be considered as “equivocal” evidence for a *Monographs* evaluation.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Haemoglobin adducts, but not DNA adducts, were formed in rats dosed with 4-nitrotoluene (Jones and Sabbioni, 2003). The NTP report shows positive mutagenic effects in the L5178Y mouse lymphoma cell assay in trials with S9 and increased SCE frequencies in cultured CHO cells with and without S9 (NTP, 2002). Another study observed evidence of genotoxicity in germ cells of Kunming male rats (Yang et al., 2005), but not in Ames tests (Haworth et al., 1983). Chromosomal aberrations were observed in CHO cells treated with 4-nitrotoluene in the presence of S9, but not without S9 (NTP, 2002). In addition, Burns et al. (1994) showed clear immunosuppression with a decrease in resistance to *Listeria* and a decrease in CD4+ T lymphocytes in the spleen and monocytes in blood (Yang et al., 2005), and spleen toxicity was found in the 13-week NTP study (Dunnick, 1992). Finally, 4-nitrotoluene showed uterotrophic effects in rats and may have estrogenic activity (Smith and Quinn, 1992), and the incidence of oncocytic renal tubule and endometrial hyperplasia of the uterus in female rats and alveolar epithelial hyperplasia in male mice was increased in a well-conducted GLP study (NTP, 2002).

### **Summary**

No studies of exposure to 4-nitrotoluene and cancer in humans are available. Since the 2019 Advisory Group review, no new data on carcinogenicity of 4-nitrotoluene in experimental animals have been published; however, the Advisory Group considered the available data to support a reconsideration of the evidence of cancer in experimental animals. In addition, 4-nitrotoluene exhibits several KCs in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 4-nitrotoluene to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## **156 Red dye No. 3 (CAS No. 16423-68-0) (erythrosine)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Red dye No. 3 (erythrosine) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The JECFA conducted an assessment of erythrosine in 2018 and, in light of new data, confirmed the previous ADI of 0–0.1 mg/kg bw (FAO/WHO, 2019).

### **Exposure characterization**

Erythrosine is used as a colourant in toothpaste products with a maximum concentration of 0.0025% (25 ppm) (European Commission, 2010). Erythrosine is used in household and commercial or institutional products (e.g. personal care and pet care). It is used as a red colouring in some foods (cherries, fish), for disclosure of dental plaque, and as a stain of some cell types (PubChem, 2024h). Aggregate exposure to erythrosine is possible from other uses (e.g. food, medical products). No studies on occupational exposure have been identified. In Europe, erythrosine is exclusively authorized for use in cocktail and specific cherries specified by the EU Commission Directive 2008/128/EC (EFSA Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources added to Food (ANS), 2011). Its use may also be restricted elsewhere, e.g. in the UK and USA.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

Several reports indicated an effect of erythrosine on thyroid hypertrophy or adenoma in rats at high doses (Borzelleca et al., 1987). Another report indicated a promoting role of erythrosine in rats, with a tumorigenic effect on the thyroid seen only after partial thyroidectomy and treatment with *N*-bis(2-hydroxypropyl)nitrosamine (Hiasa et al., 1988).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The EFSA report concluded, on the basis of human studies, that only a small fraction of erythrosine is absorbed from the gastrointestinal tract (EFSA Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources added to Food (ANS), 2011). Positive comet assays were observed in mice (Sasaki et al., 2002). However, previous studies did not find evidence for genotoxicity in vivo, leading the EFSA panel to conclude that erythrosine is not genotoxic in vivo (EFSA Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources added to Food (ANS), 2011). A positive comet assay was also observed at high concentration, and micronuclei were observed at several concentrations in HepG2 cells (Chequer et al., 2012). The conclusion from the cytokinesis-block micronucleus cytome (CBMN-Cyt) assay favoured an aneugenic effect, but this was not clear from the in vivo data (Chequer et al., 2012). Ames tests were negative, and erythrosine was found to be antimutagenic in some assays (Lakdawalla and Netrawali, 1988). In another study, there was no clear evidence for genotoxicity in human lymphocytes, but there was evidence of erythrosine binding to calf thymus DNA in vitro (Mpountoukas et al., 2010).

Receptor-mediated effects (and endocrine-disrupting effects) were observed in human and experimental systems. Interventional human studies did not show an effect on T3 and T4 levels, but there was a slight increase of TSH levels, in particular after TSH-releasing hormone stimulation (summarized in European Commission, 2010). In experimental animals, erythrosine increased thyroid hormone and TSH concentrations (summarized in European Commission, 2010). One report suggested that this may be due to increased sensitivity of TSH secretion to TSH-releasing hormone, possibly related to iodine content and interference with thyroid hormone regulation, which could lead to a continued stimulation of the thyroid gland (Jennings et al., 1990).

## Summary

No data on cancer in humans are available. Animal studies indicate that there are promoting tumorigenic effects on the thyroid, but the evidence is sparse. Mechanistic data on genotoxicity are inconclusive and cancer-promoting effects may be possible through receptor-mediated mechanisms. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of erythrosine is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 157 Hair colouring products (personal use of)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Hair colouring products (personal use of) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 99 in 2008 (IARC, 2010a).

### Exposure characterization

In the mid- to late 1970s, manufacturers changed the components of permanent hair dye products to eliminate some of the carcinogenic chemicals previously evaluated by IARC. It has been estimated that 50–80% of women in the USA, Japan, and the EU have used hair dyes (IARC, 2010a), and of those, the majority use permanent oxidizing dyes, where frequently used intermediates are aromatic amines together with an oxidizing agent. Semi-permanent and temporary hair dyes include coloured compounds that stain hair directly. Thus, hair colouring products are a broad category of agents and may be mixtures of carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic agents. Skin contact is the primary route of human exposure, but inhalation might also be of importance. Information on exposure in epidemiological studies is based on questionnaire and interview data.

### Cancer in humans

Since the last evaluation, several large-scale epidemiological studies in various countries have been conducted, including meta-analysis and prospective follow-up studies focusing on various cancer outcomes including breast cancer, NHL, leukaemia, ovarian cancer, BCC, and bladder cancer. Some of the larger and better studies suggest exposure–response associations. Taken together, the studies provide abundant new information about the association between personal hair dye use and cancer, even though the results overall are not consistent. As an example, for breast cancer a recent meta-analysis found a weak association between ever-use of hair dyes and breast cancer occurrence (pooled OR, 1.07; 95% CI, 1.01–1.13), with a similar estimate for permanent and semi-permanent hair dyes (Xu et al., 2021b). Another meta-analysis on hair dyes and breast cancer estimated an adjusted combined RR of 1.19 (95% CI, 1.03–1.37) (Gera et al., 2018). In the prospective US Nurses' Health Study, with 117 200 women followed up for 36 years having 47 000 incident cancers and over 4800 cancer-related deaths, the strongest association was between cumulative exposure to permanent hair dyes and risk of ER-negative, progesterone-receptor negative (ER<sup>−</sup>/PR<sup>−</sup>) breast cancer (HR, 1.28; 95% CI, 1.08–1.52) (Zhang et al., 2020b). In the Sister Study cohort, a prospective study of 45 000 White and Black women in the USA and Puerto Rico, an association was observed between history of any use of permanent (but not semi-permanent or temporary) hair dyes in adolescence (age 10–13 years) and breast cancer in Black women (HR, 1.77; 95% CI, 1.01–3.11) (White et al., 2021a). A previous analysis based on the same cohort found use of permanent hair dye 12 months before enrolment to be associated with 45% higher breast cancer risk in Black women and 7% higher risk in White women. In addition, nonprofessional application of semi-permanent dye to others was associated with breast cancer risk (HR, 1.28; 95% CI, 1.05–1.56) (Eberle et al., 2020). Another report from the Sister Study found ever-use of



permanent hair dye in the 12 months before enrolment to be associated with non-serous ovarian cancer (HR, 1.94; 95% CI, 1.12–3.37) but inversely associated with serous ovarian cancer (HR, 0.65; 95% CI, 0.43–0.99) (*P* for heterogeneity, 0.002) (White et al., 2021b). In the Alpha-Tocopherol, Beta-Carotene Cancer Prevention Study cohort of male Finnish smokers, men who used hair dyes experienced higher prostate cancer risk than men who did not (HR, 1.77; 95% CI, 1.03–3.05) (Lim et al., 2022). A meta-analysis revealed an OR of 1.14 (95% CI, 1.01–1.29) for use of hair dye and NHL (Qin et al., 2019). The highest OR (1.34; 95% CI, 1.04–1.92) was seen for persons who had used hair dye for > 20 years, but there was some indication of publication bias. The OR was clearly higher for women (1.38; 95% CI, 1.01–2.20) than for men (1.04; 95% CI, 0.95–1.43).

Another meta-analysis reported a slightly elevated risk of leukaemia with ever-use of hair dye (meta-RR, 1.09; 95% CI, 0.97–1.22), but a null association when restricted to the five studies that adjusted for smoking (meta-RR, 0.99; 95% CI, 0.76–1.29). In subgroup analyses, leukaemia was elevated in several strata; e.g. permanent hair-dye use (meta-RR, 1.19; 95% CI, 1.07–1.33), hair dye use pre-1980 (meta-RR, 1.49; 95% CI, 1.21–1.83)], and hair dye use for  $\geq 15$  years (meta-RR, 1.35; 95% CI, 1.13–1.62) (Towle et al., 2017).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

As previously reviewed by IARC (2010a), several commercially available hair dye formulations have been tested for carcinogenicity by skin application in mice or rats and by subcutaneous injection in a single study in rats. In mice, skin application with five different formulations significantly increased the incidence of lymphoma in females when compared with concurrent controls, yet not when compared with historical controls. In three studies in rats, a significant increase in the incidence of mammary adenomas in females was observed for skin painting of two formulations, and a significant increase in pituitary adenomas was seen in females for one formulation and in males for a different formulation. In the single study of subcutaneous injection in rats, increased incidence in mammary and uterine tumours was observed (IARC, 2010a). No experimental carcinogenicity studies of hair dye formulations have been identified since the previous IARC review.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Numerous studies investigating cytogenetic alterations or DNA damage in professional hairdressers and hair dye users are available. Previous reviews concluded that evidence of genotoxicity was not consistent (IARC, 2010a; Preston et al., 2010). In a recent systematic review, 13 studies evaluating genotoxic endpoints in hairdressers were identified. In the seven out of 13 studies judged to be of moderate or strong quality, five reported positive associations, with effects including increased micronuclei and DNA strand breaks (Guedes Pinto et al., 2023).

Associations with contact dermatitis, asthma, and other allergic conditions in both hairdressers and consumers suggest the possibility of chronic inflammation after long-term use (Helaskoski et al., 2014; He et al., 2022c). A metabolomics study showed that serum levels of several compounds related to antioxidation/ROS pathways differed significantly between hair dye users and non-users (Lim et al., 2023b).

Another recent review briefly summarized toxicity and carcinogenicity information for common ingredients found in permanent hair dye formulations and epidemiological links between hair dye exposure and cancer risk (He et al., 2022c). While some ingredients previously used in hair dyes, such as 4-methoxy-*meta*-phenylenediamine which is a recognized mutagen and rodent carcinogen, for many other ingredients the evidence appears to be limited.

## Summary

Hair colouring products are a diverse category of agents and may be mixtures of carcinogenic and non-carcinogenic agents, with changes over time. Since the last evaluation of personal use of hair dyes, several large-scale epidemiological studies have been conducted in various countries, including meta-analysis and prospective follow-up studies focusing on various cancer outcomes. Despite the limitations in the exposure assessment (self-reported data) and heterogeneity in the exposure itself (permanent versus semi-permanent, dark dyes versus light dyes), these new epidemiological findings could lead to a change in classification.

Data are available that indicate that hair dye formulations and certain hair dye ingredients are carcinogenic in experimental animals. There is some evidence that hair dyes exhibit certain KCs, in particular genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and chronic inflammation in exposed humans. Many of these studies were conducted among hairdressers (occupational exposure as a hairdresser or barber has been evaluated separately and is classified in Group 2A). The extent to which these mechanistic data could support an evaluation of personal use of hair dyes requires consideration by an *IARC Monographs* Working Group. Further exploration of commonly used hair dye formulations and ingredients, particularly those identified in epidemiological studies reporting positive cancer findings, could yield additional supporting evidence. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of hair colouring products (personal use of) to be warranted and considered it would be efficient for personal use of hair dyes to be evaluated in the same volume with hair straightening products (agent 158), because they involve many of the same studies.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 158 Hair straightening products

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Hair straightening products have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Hair straightening products are used by millions of persons worldwide. Permanent straightening of hair alters the disulphide bonds of keratin by a variety of chemicals including alkaline hydroxides (Miranda-Vilela et al., 2014). Chemical straightening can be also accomplished by ammonium or ethanolamine thioglycolate, sodium thioglycolate, methylene glycol, and other formaldehyde-releasing chemicals, or bisulphite creams. Some formulations contain formaldehyde (evaluated in Group 1 by IARC (2006a)) as an active ingredient, and recently also glutaraldehyde has been used. Skin contact and inhalation are the primary routes of exposure. NIOSH conducted a Health Hazard Evaluation to evaluate exposures to formaldehyde for hair-salon workers during hair straightening procedures and determined exposures to be above occupational exposure ceiling limits (NIOSH, 2011). The US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) also issued a hazard alert for exposure to formaldehyde during hair straightening procedures, targeted to hair-salon workers (OSHA, 2011). Information on exposure in epidemiological studies is based on questionnaire and interview data. Use of hair straighteners is higher among Black women than in other ethnic groups (Edwards et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

There are only a few case-control and cohort studies that have evaluated cancer in relation to use of hair straighteners. Studies have focused mainly on breast cancer, but there are also one or more cohort studies on uterine and ovarian cancer. In the prospective Black Women's Health Study cohort (including 44 798 US Black women with an intact uterus who were followed up from 1997 to 2019), significant positive

associations were observed between moderate or heavy use of hair straighteners and incidence of uterine cancer in postmenopausal women compared with never or light use (HR, 1.60; 95% CI, 1.01–2.53, and HR, 1.64; 95% CI, 1.01–2.64, respectively) and the HR for  $\geq 20$  years of use regardless of frequency was 1.71 (95% CI, 1.08–2.72) (Bertrand et al., 2023). In a previous study of the same cohort, duration, frequency, age at first use, and number of scalp burns were not associated with overall breast cancer risk (Coogan et al., 2021). For heavy use of hair relaxers containing lye, the corresponding HR for ER+ breast cancer was 1.32 (95% CI, 0.97–1.80); there was no association for non-lye products.

In the prospective Sister Study cohort, which includes women in the USA and Puerto Rico, White et al. (2021a) found an exposure–response association between frequency of hair straightening products in adolescence and premenopausal breast cancer (HR, 2.11; 95% CI, 1.26–3.55 in the highest exposed group). In a separate report, frequent use ( $> 4$  times/year) of straighteners/relaxers or pressing products in the past year was associated with an increased risk of ovarian cancer (HR, 2.19; 95% CI, 1.12–4.27) (White et al., 2021b). In an earlier study of the same cohort, personal hair straightener use in the 12 months before enrolment was associated with overall breast cancer risk (HR, 1.18; 95% CI, 0.99–1.41), with higher risk associated with increased frequency. Nonprofessional application of straighteners (HR, 1.27; 95% CI, 0.99–1.62) to others was associated with breast cancer risk (Eberle et al., 2020). Another analysis within the Sister Study found that women who had used any straightening product in the previous 12 months before enrolment had an HR of 1.80 (95% CI, 1.12–2.88) for developing uterine cancer compared with never-users, with a stronger association for frequent use ( $> 4$  times in the past 12 months: HR, 2.55; 95% CI, 1.46–4.45; *P* for trend, 0.002) (Chang et al., 2022).

In Ghana, a case–control study with detailed information on personal use of hair straighteners among 1131 invasive breast cancer cases and 2106 population controls found an OR of 1.58 (95% CI, 1.15–2.18) for use of hair relaxers, with higher risks for former users (OR, 2.22; 95% CI, 1.56–3.16) than current users (OR, 1.39; 95% CI, 1.00–1.93) (Brinton et al., 2018).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals exposed to hair straightening products were available to the Advisory Group. However, studies on some substances contained in hair straightening products are available.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There is evidence related to genotoxicity for hair straighteners. A hair straightening cream containing formaldehyde yielded concentration-dependent evidence of genotoxicity: it was positive for mutagenicity in the *S. typhimurium* TA100 microsome test and induced a DNA damage response using the SOS chromotest (Mazzei et al., 2010). Sodium thioglycolate was not mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* strains tested with or without liver S9 activation enzymes (NTP, 2016f). In genetic toxicity investigations, glutaraldehyde was mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* and mouse L5178Y lymphoma cells and induced chromosomal aberrations in mouse bone marrow cells in vivo after intraperitoneal injection (NTP, 1999). In a study of female hairstylists in Cairo, Egypt, women who had worked with hair straighteners containing formaldehyde ( $n = 60$ ) had significantly higher levels of micronuclei in both buccal cells and peripheral blood lymphocytes compared with a control group of hairstylists who did not handle hair straighteners ( $n = 60$ ) (Aglan and Mansour, 2020). In this study, where measured formaldehyde concentrations during hair straightening procedures exceeded regulatory limits, the difference in micronucleus frequency was greater for women who had worked with hair straighteners for  $> 5$  years ( $n = 29$ ) than for those with  $< 5$  years of exposure ( $n = 31$ ). A study of 50 beauty salon workers in Brazil demonstrated elevated levels of urinary formic acid (a metabolite of formaldehyde) and genetic damage in peripheral blood lymphocytes, as measured by the comet assay, in post- versus pre-exposure samples (Peteffi et al., 2016). Another study in Brazil also observed elevated

genetic damage by comet assay among hairdressers ( $n = 69$ ) versus blood donors ( $n = 55$ ), although no data regarding use of hair straighteners were reported (Galiotte et al., 2008). A case report from Israel described three cases of female teenagers with acute kidney injury arising soon after hair straightening procedures (Kaidar et al., 2021).

There is evidence related to induction of epigenetic alterations. A study of 49 beauty salon workers in Brazil observed a positive correlation between formaldehyde exposure, measured using personal passive samplers, and global DNA methylation. The correlation was stronger for the subset of workers who worked with hair straightening creams (Barbosa et al., 2019).

There is also mechanistic evidence related to modulation of receptor-mediated effects. In a study of 11 274 participants in a North American preconception cohort study, fecundability was lower among women reporting use of hair straighteners, with the strongest effect observed among those with 10 or more years of use, although there was not a clear monotonic relationship for many of the measures (Wise et al., 2023). Among 585 postmenopausal Ghanaian women, weak positive associations were seen between ever-use of hair relaxers and serum concentrations of estriol and 16-epiestriol. In additional analyses, these results were stronger for lye- versus non-lye-based formulations, although no differences between former and current hair straightener use was observed. Positive associations were also observed between an increasing number of scalp burns from hair relaxer use and circulating unconjugated estrogens (Geczik et al., 2023).

### Summary

There are rather few epidemiological studies of cancer in humans associated with personal use of hair straighteners, including from two well-conducted cohort studies that showed consistent positive findings for uterine cancer. No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available. There is convincing evidence that formaldehyde-containing hair straightening products exhibit KCs (genotoxicity, epigenetic alterations) in exposed humans. For non-formaldehyde hair straightening agents, there are few studies, and the overall mechanistic evidence is sparse. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of hair straightening products to be warranted and recommended evaluating this agent in the same volume as hair dyes (agent 157).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 159 Tattoos and permanent make-up

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tattoos and permanent make-up have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Tattooing is an ancient body art during which tattoo ink, consisting of solid colour pigments diluted in a carrier liquid, is injected into the upper layers of the dermis with the aim of lifelong visibility. The prevalence of tattoos is increasing. In an international survey, the current prevalence has been estimated to range from 12% in the Russian Federation up to 32% in the USA (Kluger et al. 2019).

Tattoo inks are chemical mixtures of organic (e.g. PAH, carbon black) and inorganic pigments (e.g. various metals, titanium oxide) and/or azo dyes diluted in a carrier liquid that may consist of water, alcohol, preservatives, and softeners. Agents classified in Groups 1, 2A, and 2B by the *IARC Monographs* are repeatedly found in tattoo inks. Human exposure assessment in epidemiological studies is based on questionnaires. Recently an effort was made to create and validate a questionnaire-based “epidemiological tattoo assessment tool” for use in future epidemiological studies (Foerster et al., 2023).

## Cancer in humans

Multiple case studies describe malignant melanoma on tattoos (Ricci et al., 2022). However, only a few epidemiological studies have been published. A population-based case–control analysis by Warner et al. (2020) included 1518 participants from the NHL study (737 cases) and 742 participants from the multiple myeloma study (373 cases). The authors did not find any clear associations between tattoos and NHL (OR, 1.04) or multiple myeloma (OR, 1.08). In a US nested case–control study with participants identified from a state-wide surveillance system, 156 cases with early onset BCC and 213 controls reported tattoos. Among those with tattoos, the OR of BCC at the tattoo site compared with another site was 1.8 (Barton et al., 2020). More large-scale epidemiological studies are in progress in the USA, Sweden, France, and Germany (IARC, 2024c; Nielsen et al., 2023).

## Cancer in experimental animals

A study of immunocompetent mice evaluated the effects of tattooing with a black ink containing BaP and a regimen of exposure to UVR (Lerche et al., 2015). The groups of tattooed and non-tattooed mice receiving no UVR developed no skin tumours after 1 year. In the tattooed and UVR-exposed group, the development of skin SCCs was significantly delayed compared with the irradiated non-tattooed mice, suggesting a potential protective effect. The same investigators conducted a subsequent study using a similar design to evaluate red-ink tattoos, using an ink containing the suspected carcinogen 2-anisidine (Lerche et al., 2017). As before, tattooed mice receiving no UVR did not develop any skin tumours. The time to onset of an animal's first and second SCC did not differ between the tattooed and non-tattooed control groups exposed to UVR. However, the onset of the third SCC and the growth rates of the second and third tumours were slightly faster among the tattooed mice versus controls. In a third study to evaluate the effects of red and black tattoos and UVR on the incidence of internal organ cancers (Sepehri et al., 2017), no internal cancers were detected in any of the animals across all groups (including controls) after 1 year.

## Mechanistic evidence

The cytotoxicity of tattoo inks of various colours was assessed using a panel of bacterial and mammalian cell-based bioassays for cytotoxicity, oxidative stress, genotoxicity, and the p53 response (Neale et al., 2015): the studied tattoo inks induced effects in all assays, with stronger effects observed for red and yellow inks. Overproduction of ROS from exposure to tattoo inks was also shown in a study of immortalized human keratinocyte (HaCat) cells and in a cell-free experimental system (Høgsberg et al., 2013; Arl et al., 2019).

To assess cytotoxicity and sensitization potential, 16 different tattoo inks were injected into a three-dimensional model of human skin (reconstructed epidermis on a fibroblast-populated collagen hydrogel). Four inks induced evidence of cytotoxicity and exhibited skin sensitization potential, suggesting a potential to trigger allergic contact dermatitis in tattooed individuals (Karregat et al., 2021). In another study of HaCaT cells, treatment with tattoo inks induced elevated expression of IL-18 (Sozer Karadagli et al., 2024). Several other studies have reported elevated frequencies of chronic inflammatory reactions, sometimes systemic, arising as complications of tattoos (Vagefi et al., 2006; Ruocco et al., 2015; van der Bent et al., 2021).

Investigations of chemicals found in tattoos have identified effects relevant to cancer. In studies of chemical exposures combined with UVR exposure in HaCaT cells, benzo[ghi]perylene (Group 3, IARC, 2010b), when photoactivated by UVR-A reduced cell viability and increased apoptotic cell death (Negi et al., 2023); while carbazole (Group 2B, IARC, 2013b), if photoactivated by UVR-B produced elevated levels of ROS and genetic damage as measured by the comet assay (Srivastav et al., 2020). 3,3'-Dichlorobenzidine (Group 2B, IARC, 1987a), which is used in tattoo inks, also caused dose-dependent DNA fragmentation and cell death in human Jurkat T-cells under UVR-A irradiation and was photomutagenic for *S. typhimurium* TA102 cells (Wang et al., 2005).

## Summary

Tattoo inks and permanent make-up are a heterogeneous mixture of agents, including some agents classified by IARC in Group 2B or higher. Overall, there is very limited available epidemiological evidence, but more large-scale epidemiological studies are in progress. Experimental evidence suggesting carcinogenicity from tattooing has been reported. There is some mechanistic evidence that tattoos and permanent make-up, or specific chemical constituents, exhibit KCs (e.g. genotoxicity, induction of oxidative stress and chronic inflammation). The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tattoos and permanent make-up to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 160 Bisphenol A (CAS No. 80-05-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Bisphenol A (BPA) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Bisphenol A was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a). A report from the JECFA describes the toxicological and health aspects of bisphenol A (WHO, 2011)

### Exposure characterization

BPA is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (OEHHA, 2022a). BPA is a synthetic organic compound, and its major uses are in the production of polycarbonate plastics and epoxy resins, as well as phenolic resins and polyester. Humans are exposed to BPA predominantly through contaminated food (e.g. via food packaging) and drinking-water. Levels of BPA are higher in occupational cohorts than in the general population, according mainly to studies in China (Ribeiro et al., 2017; Bousoumah et al., 2021). The level of BPA in the body varies over time due to its short biological half-life. Long-term exposure to BPA has been estimated through questionnaires combined with literature on BPA levels or by a job–exposure matrix in a few studies.

### Cancer in humans

Since 2018, more than 20 epidemiological studies have been conducted, mostly case–control studies but also at least three cohort studies. Most studies failed to support an association between BPA and various cancer outcomes. A prospective analysis from the NHANES cohort, with urinary BPA measured between 2003 and 2008 and follow-up until 2015, found a positive dose–response association for all-cause mortality, but not for cancer mortality (Bao et al., 2020a). The majority of the epidemiological studies on the carcinogenicity of BPA investigated breast cancer. Meta-analyses from 2021 and 2023, respectively, including nine case–control studies did not support an association between BPA and breast cancer (Liu et al., 2021b; Fauconnier et al., 2023). Two prospective analyses did not support an association between BPA and breast cancer (Parada et al., 2019; Salamanca-Fernández et al., 2021).

There are a few studies on prostate cancer. One prospective analysis of BPA and prostate cancer within the Spanish EPIC cohort found an HR of 1.40 for tertile 1, HR 1.37 for tertile 2 and HR 1.31 for tertile 3 compared with persons with BPA levels below the limit of detection (Salamanca-Fernández et al., 2021). A Chinese case–control study of prostate cancer, which included a cumulative BPA index, reported a positive dose–response association with BPA (Tse et al., 2017). One or two studies are available on other cancer sites.

Most studies estimated BPA exposure from a single biological sample collected at a single point in time.

## Cancer in experimental animals

There is convincing evidence for tumorigenic effects in certain tissues (mammary and prostate) in Sprague-Dawley rats (reviewed in Heindel et al., 2020 and Prins et al., 2019). Concerning the mammary gland, a statistically significant effect of BPA administered non-stop was seen on the incidence of adenoma or adenocarcinoma in rats in the regulatory core GLP study (Camacho et al., 2019). In collaboration with academic and federal government scientists, organized by the NTP, NIEHS, and the FDA's National Center for Toxicological Research (NCTR), exploratory and confirmatory analyses were conducted to enhance data interpretation, particularly regarding dose–response effects in a biological context. The study used Sprague-Dawley rats, with five BPA doses, a vehicle control, and two doses of ethinyl estradiol (EE2) as a positive control. Administration was by oral gavage starting on day 6 of gestation, followed by direct dosing of the pups after birth. Two studies were conducted: a subchronic and a chronic study. In the chronic study, two exposure regimens were used: one ending at postnatal day (PND) 21 (stop-dose), and the other continuing until tissue collection (continuous). Three hypotheses were considered: (i) BPA effects were qualitatively similar to the effects of EE2 at 0.5 µg/kg bw per day (0.5EE2); (ii) BPA impacted different features and/or had opposite effects to 0.5 EE2; and (iii) BPA had no effect on mammary gland development. Semiquantitative analysis of the subchronic study showed no significant differences at PND21, while at PND90 significant differences in the incidence of adenocarcinoma of the mammary gland were seen between the control and the lowest BPA dose in animals in estrus. In contrast, quantitative analysis of chronic PND21 samples revealed non-monotonic BPA effects, with a breakpoint between 25 and 250 µg/kg per day, confirmed by global analysis at PND90 and 6 months. (Montévil et al., 2020). Other studies showed that BPA increased the propensity to develop mammary lesions in mice and rats (Durando et al., 2007; Murray et al., 2007a; Jenkins et al., 2011; Lamartiniere et al., 2011).

Concerning the prostate, the core study showed that BPA alone did not drive prostate tumorigenesis (Camacho et al., 2019). However, the academic study, while agreeing with these results, found that BPA at the low doses increased susceptibility to develop prostate cancer in rats co-treated with ethinyl estradiol, but BPA alone at any dose did not drive carcinogenesis (Prins et al., 2018). Other general effects found in the core study lacked consistency.

## Mechanistic evidence

A detailed analysis of the association of BPA with the 10 KCs was recently conducted by the Carcinogen Identification Committee (CIC) of the state of California (Ricker et al., 2024). The evidence for electrophilicity comes from the considerable knowledge on the metabolism of BPA which leads to formation of electrophilic compounds (OEHHA, 2022a) in vitro and in vivo (reviewed in Ricker et al., 2024). This evidence is supported by the formation of ROS and electrophilic metabolites that induce oxidative DNA damage in exposed human (8-OHdG) and animal models (reviewed in Ricker et al., 2024). In general, BPA is not considered as a genotoxic agent. However, the CIC identified several studies showing genotoxicity in human cells (both primary cells and cell lines), but not in bacteria and yeast. Despite some evidence, genotoxicity in vivo remains inconclusive (summarized in Ricker et al., 2024). In addition, a few studies show that BPA alters DNA repair or causes genomic instability (Ricker et al., 2024). The CIC review described consistent evidence for epigenetic effects in several systems but found the interpretation of such effects to be difficult. Additional studies are discussed here. Concerning prostate cancer and epigenetics in rats, a study showed that developmental exposure to BPA led to methylation profiles that correlated with increased risk of prostate cancer (Cheong et al., 2016). A recent review summarized the epigenetic effects of BPA in human and rodents and highlighted their links to the male reproductive system (Cariati et al., 2020). There is evidence suggesting that BPA induces oxidative stress, which is linked to the induction of oxidative DNA damage (measured as 8-OHdG) in exposed humans and experimental systems and the

formation of reactive oxygen and nitrogen species in experimental systems (Steffensen et al., 2020; Ricker et al., 2024).

There are data suggesting chronic inflammation in animals (Ricker et al., 2024), but the data regarding exposed humans should be carefully analysed. Some studies have shown a decrease in immune function, but the data are sparse and insufficient (Ricker et al., 2024). This is an important point, since EFSA used the increase in TH17 in spleen as a biological test for the revision of the tolerable daily intake of BPA (EFSA Panel on Food Contact Materials, Enzymes and Processing Aids et al., 2023). The literature concerning the effects of BPA on a variety of receptors is considerable, addressing receptors that are relevant for cancer such as the estrogen receptor, the androgen receptor and the aryl hydrocarbon receptor. These studies were summarized by Ricker et al. (2024), who considered the data on estrogen-related receptors highly supportive of KC8.

Finally, the evidence for increased cell proliferation was found to be moderate to strong (Ricker et al., 2024). Several significant studies have described the effects of BPA on cell morphology, particularly in estrogen-sensitive organs. Concerning breast cancer and morphological effects, a study in non-human primates indicated that prenatal treatment of monkeys induced morphological changes in the breast (Tharp et al., 2012).

### Summary

Since 2018, more than 20 epidemiological studies have been conducted, and quite consistently no associations have been found for BPA and breast cancer, whereas some studies on BPA and prostate cancer (with relatively weak exposure assessment quality) have suggested an association. There are presumed to be challenges in assessing long-term BPA exposure in cancer epidemiology studies due to its short biological half-lives. There was an increase in the incidence of malignant tumours in both sexes of one species (rat) in a well-conducted GLP study. There is mechanistic evidence indicating that BPA exhibits several KCs in experimental systems and exposed humans. In particular, there are clear receptor-mediated and epigenetic effects. These could account for an implication in tumorigenesis, particularly in hormone-sensitive tissues. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of bisphenol A to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 161 Bisphenol S and bisphenol F (CAS Nos 80-09-1 and 620-92-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Bisphenol S and bisphenol F have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Bisphenol S (BPS) is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Bisphenol F (BPF) is not listed in the latest US EPA high production volume chemical list. Both BPS and BPF have been used for more than a decade (Rosenmai et al., 2014), partly as a replacement for BPA in the production of polycarbonate plastics, epoxy resins and thermal papers. Humans are exposed to BPS and BPF predominantly through contaminated food (e.g. via food packaging) and drinking-water. Few occupational exposure data are available, mainly among cashiers (BPS) and incinerator workers (BPF) (Bousoumah et al., 2021). BPF and BPS are found abundantly in urine in population-based studies among children and adults, but in general in lower concentrations compared with BPA (Stillwater et al., 2020; Catenza et al., 2021). The level of BPA in the body varies over time due to its short biological half-life.



### **Cancer in humans**

A few epidemiological case–control studies on BPS and BPF are available (breast cancer, lung cancer, thyroid cancer). In all studies, BPA and BPF were assessed from a single biological sample collected at diagnosis. In a case–control study in China, a dose-dependent positive association was seen between urinary levels of BPS and thyroid cancer (OR per natural log-unit change of 2.40), whereas inverse associations were seen for BPA and BPF (Zhang et al., 2023e). Another case–control study in China found urinary BPS to be associated with lung cancer (OR, 1.23; high versus low exposure). The same tendency was seen for BPF (Qu et al., 2022). No association was seen between serum BPS and breast cancer in a case–control study in Mexico (Segovia-Mendoza et al., 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

There are few studies on the carcinogenicity of BPF and BPS in experimental animals, and no long-term studies. A 28-day study on BPS by Yue et al. (2023b) in mice focused on uterus and ovary. Histological alterations were observed in the uterus. Gene expression analysis showed correlation with cancer pathways. An NTP systematic analysis of available studies in 2017 identified few animal studies (including subchronic studies) with primary focus on uterotrophic and mechanistic effects. No study provided evidence for carcinogenicity (NTP, 2017).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Several studies have concluded that BPS and BPF has overall similar estrogenic effects to BPA. They displayed anti-estrogenic, androgenic, and anti-androgenic effects. BPS also showed estrogenic membrane-mediated pathways (Rosenmai et al., 2014; Rochester and Bolden, 2015; NTP, 2017). There is evidence from human studies that urinary BPS and BPF may alter free testosterone levels, albeit in different directions (NHANES study, Zhang et al., 2022d). In another study, both urinary BPS and BPF concentrations negatively correlated with serum estrogen E2 levels and the E2/testosterone (total testosterone) ratio in men (Zeng et al., 2022). Regarding effects on the thyroid, there is evidence that BPF leads to increased thyroid weight and T4 in plasma (T3 decreased) in rodents (NTP, 2017). In a cohort study of pregnant women, BPS levels correlated with a decrease in T3 in the first semester, while BPF levels correlated with an increase in free T4 in the second semester (Huang et al., 2022c). In children, urinary BPF was associated with a higher free T4 level in girls only, but BPS did not show any correlation (Jang et al., 2021). Different genotoxicity activities have been reported (NTP, 2017). In human PBMCs, genotoxic effects were found for both BPF and BPS, as assessed by either micronucleus assay or comet assay (Mokra et al., 2017; Ruberto et al., 2022). Genotoxicity of BPF has been observed in HepG2 cells (Hercog et al., 2019; Audebert et al., 2011) and of BPS in human epithelial bronchial cells (George and Rupasinghe, 2018), using  $\gamma$ H2AX assay. In RWPE-1 cells, both BPS and BPF were genotoxic (BPS more than BPF) in a comet assay (Kose et al., 2020). In a systematic review of studies in humans, associations of BPS and BPF with biomarkers of oxidative stress were inconsistent (Steffensen et al., 2020). Ferguson et al. (2019) and Wang et al. (2019b) described consistent associations between BPS and BPF with some markers of oxidative stress. In PBMCs in vitro, BPF and BPS induced oxidative DNA damage, BPS being the least efficient (Mokra et al., 2018). In vivo, BPF increased oxidative stress in rat liver (Linillos-Pradillo et al., 2023a) and both BPS and BPF increased ROS in rat ovaries (Ijaz et al., 2020). In conclusion, BPS and BPF can induce oxidative stress, but the evidence is weak to moderate.

Several studies of exposed humans showed associations between bisphenols and epigenomic markers such as methylation, but the biological significance is unclear (Lu et al., 2020c; Navarro-Lafuente et al., 2022). Studies with human cells also found effects on expression of microRNAs and DNA methylation (Verbanck et al., 2017; Huang et al., 2019).

In women with unexplained recurrent spontaneous abortion, the effect of BPS on inflammatory markers was not clear (Liang et al., 2020). Another study in exposed humans showed an association of urinary BPF with neutrophil to lymphocyte ratio (Zhou et al., 2023b). A study on human cells in vitro indicated an effect of BPF on intestinal inflammation (Liu et al., 2022f). In a study using human macrophages, BPS had little effect compared with BPA (Chen et al., 2018). In vivo, BPS increased intestinal inflammation, and the effect was transgenerational in mice (Brulport et al., 2021), while BPF increased liver inflammation in rats (Linillos-Pradillo et al., 2023b). Evidence for general inflammatory response is somewhat contradictory but it is possible that tissue-specific effects are present.

### Summary

Only few sporadic and positive findings on associations in humans between BPS and BPF exposure and cancer risk for different sites are available. Assessment of long-term BPS and BPF exposure in cancer epidemiology studies is difficult due to their short biological half-lives. There are no long-term carcinogenesis studies on bisphenols S and F, but long-term studies have been identified for bisphenol A. BPS and BPF exhibit several KCs, including receptor-mediated and epigenetic effects, in exposed humans and/or experimental systems. This evidence can support a classification of carcinogenicity of BPS and BPF. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of bisphenol S and bisphenol F to be warranted and suggested that they be evaluated in the same volume as BPA (agent 160).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 162 Chlorinated paraffins

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Chlorinated paraffins have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Chlorinated paraffins were given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Chlorinated paraffins are listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a).

Current use of chlorinated paraffins (short-chain (C10–13), medium-chain (C14–17), and long-chain (C18–28)) in the USA is 150 million pounds per year (100 million pounds (short- and medium-chain chlorinated paraffins) US EPA (2009b)). In the EU, less than 1000 tonnes of short-chain chlorinated paraffins were used in 2007, mainly for rubber, sealants and adhesives (ECHA, 2008). The term “chlorinated alkanes” is also used (Government of Canada, 2024), but might be ambiguous, because some solvents that are not chlorinated paraffins have been described as chlorinated alkanes in some studies (e.g. tetrachloroethane). Short-chain chlorinated paraffins are widely used as a component of lubricants and coolants in metal-cutting and metal-forming operations. Their use as secondary plasticizers and flame retardants in plastics, especially polyvinyl chloride (PVC), is frequent, including domestically, as well as in rubber formulations, paints and other coatings, and adhesives and sealants. Medium- and long-chain chlorinated paraffins are used as alternatives for short-chain chlorinated paraffins (US EPA, 2009b). Chlorinated paraffin C23 (a long-chain chlorinated paraffin) is an extreme-pressure lubricant and flame retardant (NTP, 1986b).

Short-chain chlorinated paraffins are found worldwide in the environment, wildlife, and humans (US EPA, 2009b). They are bioaccumulative in wildlife and humans, are persistent and are transported globally in the environment, and are toxic to aquatic organisms at low concentrations (IARC, 1990b).

Medium- and long-chain chlorinated paraffins are also regarded as bioaccumulative and persistent (US EPA, 2009b).

### **Cancer in humans**

In a study based on registry data focusing on hepatobiliary cancer (involving the liver and biliary tract) within a cohort of workers at three automobile manufacturing plants in Michigan who were potentially exposed to metalworking fluids, there were indications of elevated risk of biliary tract cancer from exposure to chlorinated paraffins (OR, 3.9; 95% CI, 0.9–17), which was studied as an additive in metalworking fluids used in extreme-pressure operations with straight oils. No other studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

A 2-year bioassay in rats and mice was conducted by the NTP (NTP, 1986b). Neoplastic lesions associated with chlorinated paraffins (C12, 60% chlorine) administration were found in the liver of rats and mice of both sexes. Dosed male rats showed increased incidence of tubular cell adenomas and two low-dose males had tubular cell adenocarcinomas. The incidence of mononuclear cell leukaemia was increased in dosed male rats and in low-dose female rats. Pancreatic acinar cell tumours occurred at increased incidence in low-dose male rats. Follicular cell adenomas or carcinomas (combined) of the thyroid gland were found at increased incidence in both female rats and female mice.

In addition, in two recent scoping reviews, liver tumours and pheochromocytoma of the adrenal medulla were also highlighted (Chen et al., 2023b; Huang et al., 2023c).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The NTP report stated that chlorinated paraffins (C12, 60% chlorine) were not mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* TA97, TA98, TA100, or TA1535 in the presence or absence of liver S9 (NTP, 1986b). There is indirect evidence for a genotoxic pathway through transcriptomic analysis in zebrafish embryos (Peng et al., 2020). There is evidence of oxidative stress from studies in vitro (reviewed by Chen et al., 2023b). Immunomodulation effects in mice include increased splenic T lymphocytes and modulations of TH17 and other inflammatory pathways. It is unclear, however, whether this leads to chronic inflammation (Wang et al., 2019c; Chen et al., 2023b).

Regarding receptor-mediated effects, there is a possible interaction between ER $\alpha$  and short-chain chlorinated paraffins (Zainab et al., 2021; Chen et al., 2023b). Changes in the levels of thyroid hormones, such as T3 and T4, were observed in animal studies (Chen et al., 2023b). Activation of PPAR $\alpha$  was also observed in rodents (Klaunig et al., 2003). Short-chain chlorinated paraffins increased kidney toxicity in male rats (Warnasuriya et al., 2010).

### **Summary**

One well-conducted study has assessed associations between exposure to chlorinated paraffins and cancer risk in humans. An increased risk of biliary tract cancer was reported in both sexes of one species (rat). Thus, there are clear carcinogenic effects in experimental animals. Mechanistic data are available, including receptor-mediated effects and immunomodulation in rodents. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of chlorinated paraffins to be warranted

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 163 Pentabromodiphenyl ethers (CAS No. 32534-81-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Pentabromodiphenyl ethers (PBDEs) have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. PBDEs were given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of animal cancer and mechanistic evidence. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of brominated diphenyl ethers, including PBDE (INCHEM, 1994)

### Exposure characterization

PBDEs have often been used as flame retardants in furniture materials. The use of PBDEs has been discontinued in the EU and in the USA, but they have been found in the environment, in humans, and in various food products. Potential routes of exposure include inhalation, ingestion, and dermal exposure through soil/water waste, air pollution, and indoor air and dust (Renzelli et al., 2023). PBDEs have been widely detected in human samples, but levels are generally declining as they have been phased out of use and production (Wu et al., 2020b). Occupational exposures have been noted in several industries including in long-term use of foam mats (e.g. gymnastics workers), in electronic scrap recycling, and in carpet installers (Estill et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2019c). DE-71 is a technical PBDE mixture containing 52% PBDEs and 43% tetra- and hexabromodiphenyl ethers. At least one of the compounds in this mixture, 1,2,4-tribromo-5-(2,4-dibromophenoxy)benzene, is listed as a high production volume chemical by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a).

### Cancer in humans

No epidemiological studies of cancer in relation to PBDEs were available to the Advisory Group. Studies have recently been conducted of exposures to polybrominated diphenyl ethers more generally. For example, a recent case–control study in China found significant positive associations, including positive trends, between cancer of the breast and various brominated diphenyl ether congeners in adipose tissue (He et al., 2018b). In small case–control studies, no association was observed between polybrominated diphenyl ethers and cancers of the prostate (Pi et al., 2016), thyroid (Aschebrook-Kilfoy et al., 2015; Deziel et al., 2019), or breast (Hurley et al., 2019; Mancini et al., 2020a). Zhang et al. (2021d) found a statistically significant positive correlation of serum concentrations of BDE-047 and BDE-099 in a case–control study of thyroid cancer in China. Other pentabromodiphenyl ethers (BDE-100, -153, -154) were not associated with development of thyroid cancer in this study (Zhang et al., 2021d).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In chronic toxicity and carcinogenicity studies performed by the US NTP, oral administration of DE-71 increased the incidence of various liver tumour types in male and female rats and mice. Increased incidence of thyroid gland follicular cell adenoma or carcinoma and increased incidence of pituitary gland (pars distalis) adenoma were also observed in male rats, and increased incidence of stromal polyp or stromal sarcoma (combined) of the uterus in female rats was observed (NTP, 2016b; Dunnick et al., 2018).

### Mechanistic evidence

DE-71 gave negative results in bacterial mutagenicity assays and a micronucleus test in vivo in mice (NTP, 2016a), consistent with other studies reporting a lack of genotoxicity for PBDEs. Many studies relevant to KCs are available (Azizi et al., 2023), showing that PBDEs can induce oxidative stress (Montalbano et al., 2020) and DNA damage (Pereira et al., 2016), increase cell proliferation and have receptor-mediated effects in human cells (Kanaya et al., 2019). Higher maternal exposure to PBDE-47 (a tetrabromodiphenyl ether present in DE-71) was associated with decreased TNF $\alpha$  methylation in cord blood of exposed humans (Dao et al., 2015). Ding et al. (2021) evaluated DNA methylation changes associated

with PBDEs (BDE-47, -100, -153) in a case–control study of women with breast cancer (versus controls) and found a statistically significant relation between changes in DNA methylation and serum PBDE levels, suggesting a mechanism for increased breast cancer risk. Relevant studies with structurally related polybrominated diphenyl ether mixtures and/or individual components (e.g. tetra-, hexa- and decabromodiphenyl ethers) may also contribute to the body of mechanistic evidence.

### Summary

Though the use of PBDEs has been discontinued in the EU and the USA, these compounds have been found to be persistent pollutants in the environment, in humans, and in various food products. There is mixed evidence of cancer development in humans with exposures to specific polybromodiphenyl ethers or mixtures of congeners. Data are available indicating that PBDEs are carcinogenic in experimental animals. There is abundant evidence that PBDEs exhibit many of the KCs in experimental animals and human cell lines, and epigenetic effects have been observed in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of pentabromodiphenyl ethers to be warranted and recommended considering additional polybrominated diphenyl ethers in the future evaluation.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 164 2,3,3,3-Tetrafluoro-2-(heptafluoropropoxy)propanoic acid (HFPO-DA) (CAS No. 13252-13-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,3,3,3-Tetrafluoro-2-(heptafluoropropoxy)propanoic acid, commonly known as hexafluoropropylene oxide dimer acid (HFPO-DA or GenX), has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

HFPO-DA is used mainly as a replacement for perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) in industrial processes, as well as in consumer products. HFPO-DA is used to manufacture fluoropolymers. Since it is a substitute for PFOA, products such as some nonstick coatings and aqueous film-forming foam (AFFF) that were previously made using PFOA may now rely on HFPO-DA (US EPA, 2022).

Published data on environmental occurrence of HFPO-DA showed higher concentrations in surface water, groundwater, soil, and vegetation samples taken close to highly polluted areas (emissions and waste incineration). Published data on HFPO-DA concentrations in food (fruit and vegetables, fish, dairy products, drinking-water) are inconsistent (Gebbink and van Leeuwen, 2020).

### Cancer in humans

No studies on cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

A two-year carcinogenicity study of HFPO-DA in Sprague-Dawley rats identified associations with hepatocellular adenomas and carcinomas in females and elevated counts of pancreatic acinar adenomas and carcinomas in males, as well as a non-significant increase in Leydig cell tumours (Caverly Rae et al., 2015).

### Mechanistic evidence

The tumour findings observed in the rodent carcinogenicity study are characteristic of PPAR $\alpha$  agonists. The relevance of these findings to humans is unclear given species differences in PPAR $\alpha$  activation. HFPO-DA showed genotoxicity in a study of rat thyroid cells by comet assay and micronucleus assay (Coperchini

et al., 2020), while results with other cell types and species were mainly negative (US EPA, 2022). HFPO-DA induced oxidative stress in zebrafish embryos and HepG2 cells (Yoo et al., 2021; Ivantsova et al., 2023) and is a potent activator of PPAR $\alpha$  signalling (Evans et al., 2022; US EPA, 2022), although not estrogenic (Conley et al., 2019; Evans et al., 2022; Villeneuve et al., 2023). Most animal experimental studies have shown strong evidence of HFPO-DA-induced liver toxicity (e.g. hepatocellular hypertrophy and liver necrosis); additional findings include haematological effects (e.g. decreases in erythrocytes and haemoglobin), kidney toxicity (e.g. increased kidney weight and blood urea nitrogen), thyroid effects (e.g. lower T3 and T4 levels), gut toxicity (colonic inflammation and changes in microbiota), reproductive/developmental effects (lower gestational weight gain and pup weight, neonatal mortality), and immunotoxicity (e.g. suppression of T-dependent antibody response; decreased globulin levels and spleen weight) (ECHA, 2019a; Xie et al., 2021; US EPA, 2022).

Fewer studies have investigated HFPO-DA effects in human cells. HFPO-DA induced dose-dependent reductions in thyroid cell viability and proliferation rate, and alterations in gene expression in both a rat thyroid cell line and primary normal human thyroid cells (Zhang et al., 2021c). A study of human bone marrow mesenchymal stem cells found HFPO-DA exposure to disturb transcriptomic profiles, enhance cell proliferation, and repress stem multipotency (Pan et al., 2022). Exposure of primary human hepatocytes to HFPO-DA has been reported to increase expression of genes involved in proliferation, inflammation, and fibrosis, as well as lipid transport, metabolism, and synthesis (Marques et al., 2022; Robarts et al., 2022). HFPO-DA induced suppression of the neutrophil respiratory burst (a component of the innate immune response) in larval zebrafish, a human neutrophil-like cell line and primary human neutrophils (Phelps et al., 2023).

### Summary

No published information about cancer risk and HFPO-DA in humans is available. The only experimental carcinogenicity study of HFPO-DA conducted to date identified statistically significant exposure-related increases in hepatocellular and pancreatic tumours among rats of both sexes. There is mechanistic evidence demonstrating KCs such as oxidative stress, immunosuppression, and modulation of receptor-mediated effects (e.g. PPAR $\alpha$ ). The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of HFPO-DA to be warranted and recommended that it be evaluated in the same volume as perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (agent 165).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 165 Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS) (CAS No. 355-6-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. PFHxS is scheduled for evaluation by the JECFA in 2027 or 2028.

### Exposure characterization

PFHxS is used as a surfactant in a variety of industrial and consumer products such as food packaging, stain- and water-resistant materials, firefighting foams, and paint additives (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, 2023; US EPA, 2024e). Exposure of the general population to PFHxS occurs by consumption of food and drinking-water, inhalation of indoor air, and respiratory and oral uptake of dust containing PFHxS, its salts and PFHxS-related compounds. PFHxS has been detected in human blood and breast milk in many regions and is, together with perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS; agent 166 below), PFOA and perfluorononanoic acid (PFNA), one of the most frequently detected and predominant per- and

polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) in human blood. The fetus is exposed to PFHxS via the umbilical cord blood, and breast milk may be an important source of exposure for infants. In women post-menarche and males, PFHxS levels increase with age, and in general, the highest levels have been observed in men (ECHA, 2019b). The US EPA has not classified PFHxS as a carcinogen (Illinois EPA, 2021).

### **Cancer in humans**

A scoping review has recently been conducted on epidemiological evidence about PFAS and cancer in humans, including PFHxS (Steenland and Winquist, 2021). Sparse positive associations were noted for cancers of breast (Tsai et al., 2020), prostate (Hardell et al., 2014), and kidney (Shearer et al., 2020) with PFHxS.

In a large Swedish cohort exposed to high contamination levels of PFAS, primarily PFHxS and PFOS, there was no overall evidence of increased cancer risk. However, a slight increase in kidney cancer risk was noted. Additionally, there was a modestly elevated risk of bladder cancer (HR, 1.32; 95% CI, 1.01–1.72) and a decreased risk of prostate cancer (HR, 0.83; 95% CI, 0.71–0.98). Among individuals residing in the area with contaminated water during 2005–2013, when exposure was highest, there were elevated risks for kidney cancer (HR, 1.84; 95% CI, 1.00–3.37) but decreased risks for prostate cancer (HR, 0.76; 95% CI, 0.59–0.98) (Li et al., 2022c).

No association with testicular cancer was found in the US Air Force cohort (Purdue et al., 2023). In the American Cancer Society's Cancer Prevention Study II LifeLink Cohort, exposure to background PFHxS levels was associated with CLL/SLL in men (Winquist et al., 2023). Additional results are pending from the Prostate, Lung, Colorectal and Ovarian (PLCO) Cancer Screening Trial.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies evaluating cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Many studies have reported PFHxS dose-dependent reductions in cell viability across liver cell lines in vitro (Amstutz et al., 2022; Ojo et al., 2022; Solan et al., 2022). Studies evaluating the effects of PFHxS on the generation of ROS and DNA damage in HepG2 cells have yielded conflicting findings (Wielsøe et al., 2015; Ojo et al., 2021; Ojo et al., 2022), although PFHxS-induced associations with measures of oxidative stress have been observed in other experimental systems (zebrafish embryos, mouse oocyte maturation in vitro) (Xu et al., 2023b; Ulhaq and Tse, 2023; Feng et al., 2023). A 28-day toxicity study conducted by the NTP did not observe differences in micronucleated reticulocytes in male or female Sprague-Dawley rats (NTP, 2022). Normal human breast epithelial cells (MCF-10A) treated with 100 µM PFHxS had higher cell proliferation than cells treated at lower concentrations, followed by a drop in cell proliferation at 500 µM; no dose–response relation was observed (Pierozan et al., 2022). Treatment with PFHxS in that study was also reported to increase cell-cycle protein expression, alter histone modifications, and promote cell migration and invasion, although data from treatments at a range of concentrations were not presented.

Several cohort and cross-sectional studies in humans have found increasing serum concentrations of PFHxS to be associated with decreased antibody levels in response to vaccination, suggesting immunosuppressive effects (OEHHA, 2022b). This inverse association was supported by summary results from a meta-analysis of 14 studies (Crawford et al., 2023). In a study of deer mice, increasing PFHxS exposure was associated with decreased plaque-forming cells (suggesting a decreased humoral immune response) (Narizzano et al., 2023). PFHxS administration had no effect on the weight of immune organs in Sprague-Dawley rats and CD-1 mice (Chang et al., 2018a; NTP, 2022).

There is consistent evidence of an association between PFHxS and liver toxicity. Exposure caused increased liver weight in rats and mice (He et al., 2022d; Narizzano et al., 2023), as well as liver steatosis

symptoms resembling non-alcoholic fatty liver disease (NAFLD) in mice and zebrafish embryos (Bijland et al., 2011; Das et al., 2017; Ulhaq and Tse, 2024). Many effects of PFHxS in the liver appear to be mediated through PPAR $\alpha$  signalling (Das et al., 2017) and PFHxS exposure has been shown to activate PPAR $\alpha$  in both human and animal in vitro assays (Rosenmai et al., 2018; Evans et al., 2022). A positive association between serum PFHxS concentration and risk of NAFLD was observed in cross-sectional epidemiological studies of children and adults (Jin et al., 2020; Zhang et al., 2023a).

Regarding receptor-mediated effects, increasing PFHxS exposure was associated with lower thyroid hormone levels (T3 and T4) in two studies of rats (Ramhøj et al., 2020; NTP, 2022). In contrast, the totality of the evidence from epidemiological studies investigating associations of PFHxS with thyroid hormone or thyroid disease is inconclusive (OEHHA, 2022b). PFHxS exposure of pregnant mice has been reported to induce reproductive effects such as defects in estrous cycle and oocyte maturation, intrauterine growth restriction, and fetal death (Adyeni et al., 2023; Narizzano et al., 2023; Yao et al., 2023a; Zhang et al., 2023b).

### Summary

A few human cancer studies suggest positive associations with PFHxS exposure. No experimental evidence of animal carcinogenicity has been reported. There is evidence that PFHxS exhibits KCs, in particular immunosuppression and modulation of PPAR $\alpha$  receptor-mediated effects. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of perfluorohexanesulfonic acid to be warranted and recommended that it be evaluated in the same volume as HFPO-DA (agent 164).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 166 Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) (CAS No. 1763-23-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 135 in 2023 (Zahm et al., 2023). This classification was based on *strong* mechanistic evidence. The evidence for cancer in experimental animals was *limited* for PFOS, and the evidence regarding cancer in humans was *inadequate*. PFOS is scheduled for evaluation by the JECFA in 2027 or 2028.

### Exposure characterization

PFOS is part of the large group of PFAS. Due to its hydrophobicity, lipophobicity, surface active properties, and chemical stability, it has been used in various applications including oil-, water-, and stain-repellent surface treatments, AFFF used in firefighting, as a mist suppressant in industrial processes, and in the production of semiconductors and electronics, and in electroplating and printing. The use of PFOS has been phased out in North America and Europe since the 2000s by agreements and guidelines such as the Stockholm Convention (Zahm et al., 2023). PFOS is extremely resistant to chemical degradation and highly mobile in the environment and has been detected in various environmental samples worldwide, including water, air, plants, crops, and animal-based foods (Schrenk et al., 2020b).

Occupational exposure in settings where the use of PFOS is not banned is expected to occur via inhalation or dermal contact. Firefighters might be exposed when using legacy stocks of AFFF. The general population is exposed mainly via the diet and drinking-water and potentially via legacy consumer products. In communities near sources of pollution, the general population is exposed mainly via drinking-water (Zahm et al., 2023).



## Cancer in humans

A few dozen studies have assessed the association between PFOS exposure and cancer risk. These were conducted in: (i) populations of workers, with relatively high exposure; (ii) cohorts of residents of areas with PFOS contamination and potentially high exposure, mainly via drinking-water; and (iii) the general population with lower (background) exposure. The evidence is strongest for testis, breast, and thyroid cancer, as described in the forthcoming *IARC Monographs* Volume 135 (summarized in Zahm et al., 2023), but for all cancer types, the evidence was considered *inadequate*.

No studies showed increased risk for breast cancer overall, but two informative prospective studies showed an increased risk of hormone receptor-positive breast cancers associated with higher levels of PFOS (Mancini et al., 2020b; Chang et al., 2023c). Ten other studies reported null findings, but these generally did not evaluate hormonal subtypes. For testicular cancer, the two most informative, conducted within a cohort of Air Force servicemen (Purdue et al., 2023) and among residents of a contaminated area in Sweden (Li et al., 2022c), showed an imprecise positive correlation and a positive correlation, respectively.

For thyroid cancer, some positive evidence related to PFOS exposure came from occupational studies (Leonard et al., 2008; Barry et al., 2013) among women in the Rønneby Register cohort study in Sweden (Li et al., 2022c) and in a hospital-based case–control study in New York, USA, exposed to background levels (van Gerwen et al., 2023). However, in a well-conducted population-based study among women in Finland who were exposed at background levels, findings for PFOS were null after adjusting for other PFAS compounds (Madrigal et al. 2024). There were many other studies on other cancer sites, but associations were largely null. Since the previous evaluation in November 2023, a cohort study of fluorochemical production workers found a significant increase of risk for lung cancer associated with PFOS exposure and some indicative findings for an increased risk of colorectal, bladder, and pancreatic cancer (Alexander et al., 2024). A study of childhood ALL in the Finnish Maternity Cohort (Jones et al., 2024) found no association overall, but found a positive association for samples collected during a time period (1986–1995) of high exposure to PFOS.

## Cancer in experimental animals

In the last evaluation of PFOS (IARC, 2024b; Zahm et al., 2023) there was *limited* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of PFOS, based on an increase in the incidence of an appropriate combination of benign and malignant neoplasms in one sex (female) of a single species (rat) in a well-conducted study that complied with GLP. Since then, no new studies became available to the Advisory Group.

## Mechanistic evidence

In the last evaluation of PFOS (IARC, 2024b; Zahm et al., 2023) there was *strong* evidence that PFOS exhibits multiple KCs in exposed humans, in human primary cells, and in experimental systems. There is evidence that PFOS induces epigenetic mechanisms and that PFOS is immunosuppressive, from a number of studies in exposed humans and experimental systems. In addition, there is strong evidence that PFOS modulates receptor-mediated effects. PFOS also modulates thyroid- and androgen-mediated effects in experimental systems, and PPAR $\alpha$  and CAR/PXR in both human primary cells and experimental systems. The pattern of KCs showing strong evidence was very similar between PFOS and PFOA (Group 1).

## Summary

Few new human cancer studies have been published on PFOS since the last evaluation, with no new data on the cancer sites with the most positive findings in the previous evaluation (breast, prostate, and thyroid). No new carcinogenesis studies in experimental animals have been identified. The available mechanistic evidence on the key characteristics would not support a re-evaluation of PFOS on the basis of

mechanistic class. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of perfluorooctanesulfonic acid is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 167 Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) (CAS No. 117-81-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate (DEHP) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 101 in 2011 (IARC, 2013c), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of DEHP (WHO, 1992).

### Exposure characterization

DEHP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). DEHP is a plasticizer mainly used in PVC products and present in various types of (soft) plastic products, but also in some pesticides, wire and cable, food packaging materials, and children's toys. Although DEHP and a few other phthalates have been regulated in Europe (Boucher, 2021), urinary metabolites from DEHP and other phthalates are still widely present in the population (Kang et al., 2021b), including in children and adolescents (Vogel et al., 2023b). Urinary levels of DEHP and its metabolites have been found in a few studies to be higher in occupationally exposed people compared with unexposed workers (IARC, 2013c).

### Cancer in humans

This section is primarily based on DEHP and its metabolites. Since the last evaluation, where there was *inadequate* evidence regarding cancer in humans, at least two meta-analyses, mainly based on case–control studies, have been performed for breast cancer. A meta-analysis including nine case–control studies did not observe an association between phthalate metabolites (including from DEHP) and breast cancer (Liu et al., 2021b). A meta-analysis including four studies (Fu et al., 2017b) found no indication of an increased risk associated with phthalate metabolites in general, but an OR for breast cancer of 1.24 for the highest versus the lowest categories of urinary levels of DEHP metabolites.

In a nested case–control study within the WHI cohort, 13 phthalate metabolites (including those of DEHP) were analysed in 2–3 urine samples per participant (Reeves et al., 2019). ORs for breast cancer risk associated with each phthalate metabolite up to 19 years of follow-up was estimated. Overall, no significant positive association between phthalate biomarkers and breast cancer risk was seen. In one of the few case–control studies where DEHP metabolites were measured before diagnosis Wu et al. (2021b) found in a nested case–control study that breast cancer risk was higher for those in tertile 2 (OR, 1.32) and tertile 3 (OR, 1.26) of primary and secondary metabolites of DEHP, compared with those in tertile 1.

One or two case–control or cross-sectional studies have considered other outcomes, including prostate and colorectal cancer. For thyroid cancer, at least four studies are available, including one paper in Chinese, which was difficult to judge from the English abstract (Mao et al., 2023a). In a small, hospital-based case–control study, also conducted in China, Liu et al. (2020) found urinary levels of DEHP metabolites to be positively associated with both thyroid cancer and benign thyroid nodules. In a case–control study, Miao et al. (2020) found urinary DEHP metabolites to be positively associated with papillary thyroid cancer (OR, 5.35) in an analysis that included mutual adjustment for other phthalate metabolites. In a small case–control study, Marotta et al. (2019) compared 27 patients with benign thyroid nodules and 28 with thyroid cancer.

Patients with serum DEHP above the limit of detection had a much higher odds for thyroid cancer compared with patients with benign nodules (OR, 15.1).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation, there was *sufficient* evidence that DEHP induces cancer in experimental animals, based on increased incidence of hepatocellular adenoma and HCC (and some other tumours) in rats and mice (IARC, 2013c). Since then, an NTP study evaluating the carcinogenicity of DEHP in rats following dietary administration of DEHP confirmed the previous findings on increased incidence of hepatocellular and pancreatic tumours in rats (NTP, 2021c). Additionally, the study found increases in the incidence of uterine (including cervix) adenoma, adenocarcinoma, SCCs, and squamous cell papilloma (combined) in female rats.

### Mechanistic evidence

DEHP has been extensively tested in bacterial mutagenicity and mammalian cell genotoxicity assays, which have generally given negative results (IARC, 2013c). A large number of studies have shown DEHP and other phthalates to affect other end-points related to the KCs, including disruption of steroidogenesis, increased oxidative stress and apoptosis, and modulation of nuclear receptor signalling in animals and experimental systems including human cells (IARC, 2013c). Several more recent studies reporting associations of DEHP exposure with markers of oxidative stress (and other relevant end-points) in exposed humans (Huang et al., 2020b; Waits et al., 2020) could be informative for understanding the carcinogenic hazard of DEHP and other co-occurring phthalates.

### Summary

Meta-analyses performed since the previous evaluation do not suggest a positive association between DEHP and breast cancer in humans, but in one of the higher-quality studies an exposure–response relation was observed. One study on DEHP and thyroid cancer suggested a positive association, but with several limitations. Evidence is already *sufficient* for cancer in experimental animals. There is evidence that DEHP exhibits KCs in exposed humans, particularly oxidative stress and epigenetic effects; however, in studies in exposed humans it is difficult to separate effects of DEHP from those of other co-occurring phthalates. No mechanistic studies in human primary cells or tissues were identified. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 168 Butyl benzyl phthalate (CAS No. 85-68-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Butyl benzyl phthalate (BBP) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 73 in 1998 (IARC, 1999b). The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of BBP (WHO, 1999a).

### Exposure characterization

BBP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). BBP acts as a plasticizer used mainly in PVC products and present in various types of (soft) plastic products including vinyl floor tiles, vinyl foam and carpet backing, and cellulosic resins; it is also used as an organic intermediate (IARC, 1999b). Although BBP and a few other phthalates have been regulated in the EU (Boucher, 2021), urinary metabolites from BBP and other phthalates are still widely present in the population (Kang et al., 2021b), including in children and adolescents (Vogel et al., 2023b).

According to the 1981–1983 National Occupational Exposure Survey conducted by NIOSH, approximately 330 000 workers in the USA were potentially exposed to BBP (IARC, 1999b).

### Cancer in humans

Since the previous evaluation, at least two meta-analyses mainly based on case–control studies have been performed for BBP (or its metabolites) and breast cancer. A meta-analysis including nine case–control studies did not suggest an association between BBP metabolites and breast cancer (Liu et al., 2021b). A meta-analysis including four studies (Fu et al., 2017b) found no indication of an increased risk of breast cancer for the BBP metabolite monobenzyl phthalate (MBzP). In a nested case–control study within the WHI cohort, 13 phthalate metabolites (including the MBzP) were analysed in two or three urine samples per participant (Reeves et al., 2019). ORs were estimated for breast cancer risk associated with each phthalate metabolite after up to 19 years of follow-up, and MBzP was found to be inversely associated with breast cancer. In one of the few studies in which BBP metabolites were measured before diagnosis, Wu et al. (2021b) found no association between MBzP and breast cancer in a nested case–control study. Few studies are available for other cancer outcomes.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *limited* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. BBP has been tested in several long-term carcinogenicity studies in rats and mice. In female rats, BBP administered in the feed caused an increase in the incidence of mononuclear cell leukaemia (NTP, 1982b). In a separate study with BBP in the feed, pancreatic acinar cell adenoma or carcinoma (combined) was observed in male rats, and increases in the incidence of pancreatic acinar cell adenoma and urinary bladder transitional epithelial papilloma were observed in female rats (NTP, 1997b). BBP administration was not associated with increased incidence of tumours in male or female mice (NTP, 1982b).

### Mechanistic evidence

In mutagenicity tests with BBP, the NTP (1997b) reported negative results from studies in mammalian cells and bacteria *in vitro*, and positive results in two mouse studies *in vivo*. Other studies have shown that BBP can induce oxidative stress and DNA damage in human primary cells (Sicińska et al., 2021) and increased cell proliferation in human cancer cell lines (Zhu et al., 2019).

In a wide variety of test systems including high-throughput screening conducted as part of the Tox21 programme, BBP increased cell proliferation, demonstrated activity at several nuclear hormone receptors, and altered the expression of genes associated with potential carcinogenic mechanisms in human cancer cells (OEHHA, 2013a; NTP, 2023d).

### Summary

Since the last evaluation, meta-analyses have not identified an association between BBP and breast cancer in humans, and this was supported by two of the better studies. Available data indicate that BBP is carcinogenic in experimental animals. BBP administered orally (in feed) caused tumours at several tissue sites in two different long-term studies in female rats (study 1) and in male and female rats (study 2). The evaluation of the evidence from experimental animals may change based on the criteria in the latest version of the *IARC Monographs* Preamble (IARC, 2019b). There is evidence that BBP exhibits several KCs, in particular increased cell proliferation and receptor-mediated effects in experimental systems. BBP has a similar structure to other carcinogenic phthalates, including DEHP, which is currently classified in Group 2B by the *Monographs* programme. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of BBP to be warranted and recommended that this agent be evaluated in the same volume as other phthalates in this report (see agents 169 and 170).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 169 Dibutyl phthalate (CAS No. 84-72-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Dibutyl phthalate (DBP) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

DBP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). DBP is one of the six phthalic acid esters found on the Priority Pollutant List, which consists of pollutants regulated by the US EPA (US EPA, 2014). DBP acts as a plasticizer used mainly in PVC products and present in various types of (soft) plastic products. It is used in consumer products, e.g. as a coalescing aid in latex adhesives, as a solvent, and in personal care products (e.g. cosmetics). It is also used in pharmaceutical capsules (Ennis et al., 2018).

Even though DBP and a few other phthalates have been regulated in the EU (Boucher, 2021), urinary metabolites from DBP and other phthalates are still widely present in the population (Kang et al., 2021b), including in children and adolescents (Vogel et al., 2023b). Occupational exposure to DBP has been documented, for example in urine samples among manicurists (Kwapniewski et al., 2008).

### Cancer in humans

At least two meta-analyses mainly based on case–control studies have been performed for phthalates as a group and breast cancer. A meta-analysis including nine case–control studies did not suggest an association between DBP metabolites and breast cancer (Liu et al., 2021b). In a meta-analysis including four studies, Fu et al. (2017b) found no increased risk of breast cancer for the metabolite monobutyl phthalate. In a nationwide prospective study in Denmark (Ahern et al., 2019), DBP exposure was estimated from the DBP content of drugs, using data from a prescription registry. For nearly 10 million woman-years of follow-up, very high DBP exposure (> 10 cumulative g) was associated with an HR of 1.9 for ER-positive breast cancer.

In a case–control study nested within the WHI cohort, DBP metabolites were analysed in two or three urine samples per participant (Reeves et al., 2019). ORs were estimated for breast cancer risk associated with each phthalate metabolite after up to 19 years of follow-up, and no association between DBP metabolites and breast cancer risk was seen. In one of the few studies where DBP metabolites were measured before diagnosis, Wu et al. (2021b) found no association between DBP metabolites and breast cancer in a nested case–control study. In a study from the same cohort, prediagnostic urinary DBP metabolites were associated with endometrial cancer, OR: 2.09 (tertile 2) and OR: 1.77 (tertile 3) compared to tertile 1 (Sarink et al., 2021). Few studies are available for other cancer outcomes.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In 2-year studies with DBP in feed conducted by the NTP, marginal increases in the incidence of pancreatic acinus adenomas were observed in male rats. There was no evidence of carcinogenic activity of DBP in female rats or in male or female mice (NTP, 2021d).

### Mechanistic evidence

DBP has tested positive in some mammalian cell mutagenicity assays (NTP, 2024b) and induces oxidative stress and DNA strand breaks in primary human cells (Sicińska et al., 2021). Oxidative stress and DNA damage (Binder et al., 2021) and increased cell proliferation (Bu et al., 2023) have been observed in human cancer cell lines exposed to DBP. DBP is structurally related to other phthalates, e.g. DEHP (see agent 167) and BBP (see agent 168).

## Summary

Meta-analyses have not identified an association between DBP and breast cancer in humans, a finding supported by two of the higher-quality case–control studies. A register-based prospective cohort study found an association for highly exposed individuals with ER-positive breast cancer. Information on other cancer sites is very sparse. Data are available indicating that in experimental animals DBP is carcinogenic in one sex of one species (rat). There is evidence that DBP exhibits several KCs, in particular genotoxicity and increased cell proliferation in experimental systems, and induction of oxidative stress and DNA damage in primary human cells. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of dibutyl phthalate to be warranted and recommended that this agent be evaluated in the same volume as other phthalates in this report (see agents 168 and 170).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 170 Diisononyl phthalate (CAS No. 28553-12-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Diisononyl phthalate (DINP) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

DINP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). DINP is usually described as part of the subgroup of “high molecular weight” phthalates, in contrast to “low molecular weight” phthalates such as DEHP, DBP and BBP (OECD, 2007). DINP acts as a plasticizer used mainly in PVC products and present in various types of (soft) plastic products, but also in children's toys. Other reported uses are in shoe soles, sealants, paints, and lacquers, as for DEHP. According to the DINP industry, the substance was, together with DEHP, the phthalate of highest commercial interest in Europe in the early 2000s (ECHA, 2010). Urinary metabolites from DINP and other phthalates are widely present in the population (ECHA, 2010) and have been detected in at least 65% of children and adolescents (Vogel et al., 2023b). Occupational exposure to DINP has been indicated in a study among plastics workers in Finland (Porrás et al., 2020).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

DINP has been tested in several long-term carcinogenicity studies in rats and mice (reviewed in CPSC, 2001; OEHHA, 2013b). Increases in the incidence of hepatocellular tumours (malignant and combined malignant and benign) and mononuclear cell leukaemia were observed in male and female rats. In one study, increases in the incidence of renal tubule cell carcinomas were also observed in male rats. In male and female mice, DINP administration led to increases in the incidence of hepatocellular adenomas and carcinomas.

### Mechanistic evidence

Diisononyl phthalate (DINP) tested negative in assays for bacterial mutagenicity and mammalian genotoxicity in vitro and in vivo (OEHHA, 2013b). DINP is anti-androgenic in vitro and in vivo and shows activity towards several nuclear receptors, including PPAR, CAR, and PXR, in human and rodent cells (OEHHA, 2013b; NTP, 2023e). Short-term oral toxicity studies in mice have demonstrated that DINP can induce oxidative damage and inflammatory responses in liver and kidney (Ma et al., 2014) and increase ROS and DNA–protein cross-links in liver and kidney (Liang and Yan, 2020).

## Summary

No studies of cancer in humans were identified. Data are available from multiple studies indicating that DINP is carcinogenic in experimental animals. There is evidence that DINP exhibits certain KCs, in particular receptor-mediated effects, oxidative stress, and DNA damage in experimental systems including human cells. These data could support an evaluation of carcinogenicity of DINP. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of diisononyl phthalate to be warranted and recommended that this agent be evaluated in the same volume as other phthalates in this report (see agents 168 and 169).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 171 Tris(chloropropyl) phosphate (CAS No. 13674-84-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tris(chloropropyl) phosphate (TCPP) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. TCPP was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of evidence for cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

TCPP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). TCPP is a flame retardant that is used primarily in polyurethane foams but also in paint, adhesives and coating, and as a plasticizer in polymers used in aerospace equipment and products.

Processing, distribution, use, and disposal of TCPP can result in releases to the environment. TCPP has been identified in surface water, groundwater, sediment, fish samples, public swimming pools, and human milk (Sundkvist et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2016b; Teo et al., 2016; Khairy and Lohmann, 2019). The general population could be exposed by inhalation of vapour, direct skin contact with furniture fabrics, and incidental ingestion of contaminated water or seafood. Children could be exposed by breast feeding or by mouth contact with furniture fabrics and other objects. In some studies, the possibility of skin absorption of cosmetic products and household dust has been noted (Pawar et al., 2017).

There is potential for occupational exposure during the manufacture and industrial or commercial use of TCPP, including handling, recycling, and disposal of waste. Bello et al. (2018) demonstrated the relevance of dermal occupational exposure in a study with workers using spray polyurethane foam. In this study, high levels of urinary biomarkers for TCPP were found in workers. Other exposed occupations are carpet installation, chemical manufacturing, foam manufacturing, electronic scrap work, gymnastics, rigid board installation, nail salons, and roofing (Estill et al., 2020).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In 2-year studies with TCPP in feed conducted by the NTP, there was an increased incidence of hepatocellular tumours (adenoma or carcinoma combined) in male rats, and an increased incidence of uterine tumours (adenoma or adenocarcinoma combined) in females. Dietary administration of TCPP also caused liver tumours in mice, with increased incidence of HCC in males and of hepatocellular adenoma and HCC in females (NTP, 2023a).

### Mechanistic evidence

Numerous genotoxicity studies have been conducted for TCPP and are summarized in reports from the European Commission, ECHA, and Health Canada. Most of these studies gave negative or equivocal results, and very few showed weakly positive results. In genetic toxicology tests performed by the NTP, TCPP showed no mutagenic effects in several bacterial strains and in rodent assays *in vivo*, except for a small but significant increase in micronuclei in male mice (NTP, 2023a). In addition, higher incidence of endometrial hyperplasia was observed in rats (NTP, 2023a).

In Tox21 high-throughput screening assays, TCPP was a weak activator of the CAR and PXR. TCPP was active in several assays that are mapped to KCs, including alteration of DNA repair and genomic stability (NTP, 2023b). Additionally, some compounds structurally similar to TCPP, including tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate, are carcinogenic to rodents.

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans were identified. Available data indicate that TCPP is carcinogenic in rats and mice. There are inconclusive results on the genotoxicity of TCPP accompanied by a few other positive findings on KC8 and KC10 in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tris(chloropropyl) phosphate to be warranted, in view of the evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 172 Tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate (TCEP) (CAS No. 115-96-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate (TCEP) was evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999a). TCEP was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of its structural similarity to TCPP (agent No. 171 in this report).

### Exposure characterization

TCEP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “TCEP is an organophosphate flame retardant and plasticizer and is used in a variety of industrial and household products. Because of its many uses, it occurs in multiple environmental media. Residential indoor air and dust are important exposure pathways.”

### Cancer in humans

A small case–control study observed higher levels of TCEP in household dust from homes of participants with papillary thyroid cancer than from those of controls (Hoffman et al., 2017).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In a bioassay using F344/N rats, there was increased incidence of renal tubule adenoma in male and female rats. Thyroid follicular cell neoplasms and mononuclear cell leukaemia in male and female rats may have been related to chemical administration. In B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice, there was equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity in male mice, shown by a marginally increased incidence of renal tubule cell neoplasms. Equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity in female mice was shown by a marginally increased incidence of Harderian gland adenomas (NTP, 1991).



### **Mechanistic evidence**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “TCEP was not mutagenic in bacterial assays and caused equivocal or no effect on chromosomal aberrations and SCE in CHO cells. Evidence beyond the NTP studies is sparse. TCEP was active in a PXR nuclear receptor assay in US EPA ToxCast programme (ToxCast/Tox21: two active assays, Attagene PXR cis, PXR trans) (Bajard et al., 2019). There is one report on in vitro cytotoxicity mediated by oxidative stress (Yu et al., 2019c).” Few new data have appeared since then.

### **Summary**

The Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **173 Allyl alcohol (CAS No. 107-18-6)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Allyl alcohol has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Allyl alcohol is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Allyl alcohol is a colourless liquid with a mustard-like odour (New Jersey Department of Health, 2017). It is used in the manufacture of detergents, plastics, resins, pharmaceuticals, and chemicals and as an agricultural agent and food additive (NTP, 2006; NCBI, 2024e). It is presumed that occupational and non-occupational exposures to allyl alcohol could occur from the uses described above.

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

A chronic toxicity study in hamsters and rats observed no exposure-related differences in any type of tumour (Lijinsky and Reuber, 1987). A 2009 EPA report noted deficiencies in the design of this study, including the use of a single dose level, a small number of tested animals, and the exclusion of female hamsters (US EPA, 2009c). A recent chronic study of mice and rats has been conducted at the Japan Bioassay Research Center, although no English-language report is available. Tables available online that summarize the results from rats do not indicate any tumour increase (JBRC, 2022c).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Allyl alcohol is metabolized to acrolein (Group 2A). Genotoxicity testing of allyl alcohol has yielded inconsistent findings (US EPA, 2009c). Mutagenicity tests of *S. typhimurium* were negative for most evaluated strains, although a positive test for one strain was reported, as well as a test of Chinese hamster V79 cells. Mutagenicity tests of *Streptomyces coelicolor* and *Aspergillus nidulans* were negative (US EPA, 2009c). No differences in bone marrow and peripheral blood micronucleated erythrocytes were observed across exposures in a subchronic study for male or female mice (NTP, 2006).

## Summary

No studies on cancer in humans were available. There is no evidence that allyl alcohol is carcinogenic in experimental animal studies or that it demonstrates KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of allyl alcohol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 174 Carbon tetrachloride (CAS No. 56-23-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Carbon tetrachloride has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d). The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of carbon tetrachloride (WHO, 1999b).

### Exposure characterization

Carbon tetrachloride is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Carbon tetrachloride has been used widely as a solvent in dry cleaning, primarily from the 1930s until the 1960s, after which it was gradually replaced first with trichloroethylene and then tetrachloroethylene (IARC, 1995; Callahan et al., 2019). Another major application has been as a solvent in metal degreasing. It has also been used as an agricultural fumigant and in the production of refrigerants and propellants (McDuffie et al., 2001; Callahan et al., 2018). The production and use of carbon tetrachloride have been restricted in many parts of the world, but it may still be used in laboratories and some industrial processes (production of chlorine, caustic soda, or chlorinated rubber) (NHS UK, 2022). The main route for occupational exposure is via inhalation. The general population is exposed primarily via the air, with higher levels in urban areas and near industrial sites (Garcia et al., 2015).

### Cancer in humans

In the last *Monographs* evaluation of carbon tetrachloride in 1998, the evidence for cancer in humans was assessed as *inadequate*. Several new studies of the association between cancer and carbon tetrachloride exposure have been published. For NHL, several studies show consistent associations. Three out of the four cohort studies with results on NHL and carbon tetrachloride exposure showed positive associations. All three new population-based case–control studies in Canada and the USA also found positive associations (McDuffie et al., 2001; Wang et al., 2009; Callahan et al., 2018).

Some studies have found associations of carbon tetrachloride exposure with brain cancers. In a cohort of Japanese-American men in Hawaii, USA, Nelson et al. (2012) found an association of glioblastoma multiforme with occupational exposure to carbon tetrachloride, as assessed using questionnaire data that also included information on co-exposures such as smoking; however, it was not clear whether these co-exposures were considered in the models. In a hospital-based case–control study, Neta et al. (2012) found a significant association between risk of glioma and occupational carbon tetrachloride exposure when restricting to exposed workers only. However, Ruder et al. (2013) found an inverse association between estimated occupational carbon tetrachloride exposure and glioma in a registry-based case–control study. In a population-based case–control study, Heck et al. (2013) found an association between neuroblastoma in children and maternal carbon tetrachloride exposure during pregnancy, based on modelled air exposure. There is potential for confounding in most of these studies, as co-exposure to other (chlorinated) solvents in the occupational setting and other carcinogens is likely and only some of the studies had detailed information on lifestyle factors, precluding adjustment for factors such as cigarette smoking. For cancer sites such as lung, breast, and head and neck cancers, there were a lower number of studies and only some sporadic

findings for other cancer sites. The Advisory Group noted that some potentially informative studies are in progress in populations exposed in the USA.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of carbon tetrachloride, based on findings of tumours in several species of experimental animals, at two different tissue sites (liver and adrenal gland), and by several different routes of exposure (IARC, 1999b). Since carbon tetrachloride was evaluated by IARC, additional studies in mice have been reported. Inhalation exposure to carbon tetrachloride caused benign and malignant liver tumours (hepatocellular adenoma and carcinoma) and benign adrenal-gland tumours (phaeochromocytoma) in mice of both sexes (Nagano et al., 2007; reporting the JBRC, 1998).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Carbon tetrachloride enters the body through inhalation, ingestion, and dermal absorption. Respiration is the primary route of exposure, and pulmonary absorption is estimated to be 60% in humans. Carbon tetrachloride is activated by cytochrome CYP2E1, CYP2B1 or CYP2B2, and possibly CYP3A, to form the trichloromethyl radical,  $\text{CCl}_3^\bullet$ , which can react with oxygen to form the trichloromethylperoxy radical  $\text{CCl}_3\text{OO}^\bullet$ , a highly reactive species. Both metabolites are capable of covalent binding locally to cellular macromolecules, with preference for fatty acids from membrane phospholipids (Raucy et al., 1993; Gruebele et al., 1996; McGregor and Lang, 1996; Manibusan et al., 2007; Unsal et al., 2020). Regarding the KCs, new studies have been published since the 1998 evaluation. In peripheral blood lymphocytes taken from four non-smoking healthy individuals, exposure to carbon tetrachloride induced a significant increase in SCE frequency, a significant reduction in the activities of antioxidant enzymes SOD and GPx, and a reduction of GSH levels (Alpsoy et al., 2011). In human TK6 cells, exposure to carbon tetrachloride induced DNA hypomethylation (Tabish et al., 2012). In mice treated by intraperitoneal injections, carbon tetrachloride induced testicular DNA damage, as evidenced by a significant increase of chromosomal aberrations in primary spermatocytes (Diab et al., 2018); it also increased serum levels of pro-inflammatory cytokines and chemokines Il-6, Il-1 $\beta$ , Ifng, and Tnfa (Sun et al., 2022b; Xu et al., 2022a; Wei et al., 2023). In rats, carbon tetrachloride administered by gavage induced oxidative stress in erythrocytes, spleen, liver, and kidney; in addition, it decreased the enzymatic activities of SOD, GPx, and CAT in these tissues (Rahmouni et al., 2018; 2019). Carbon tetrachloride induced genotoxicity by increasing the frequency of both chromosomal aberrations and SCE; it induced a massive proliferation and hypertrophy of reticulo-endothelial cells as well as an inflammation oedema in rat spleen (Rahmouni et al., 2018). The same alterations (decreased activities of CAT, GPx, SOD, and glutathione-S-transferase) and DNA damage were observed in the liver when carbon tetrachloride was given intraperitoneally to rats (Alkreathy et al., 2014; Batool et al., 2017). Administration of carbon tetrachloride to rats for 3 weeks resulted in hypomethylation of liver DNA (Varela-Moreiras et al., 1995).

### **Summary**

Several studies show consistent associations between carbon tetrachloride exposure and risk of NHL in humans. Additionally, a few studies show associations with brain cancer. In all studies, there is potential for confounding due to co-exposure to other solvents. Some potentially informative studies may be forthcoming. Carbon tetrachloride caused tumours in several species of experimental animals exposed by several routes. It exhibits several of the KCs (e.g. genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and inflammation) in human cells and in rodents. There is limited available mechanistic evidence from exposed humans or human primary cells or tissues. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of carbon tetrachloride to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 175 Cumene (CAS No. 98-82-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Cumene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 101 in 2011 (IARC, 2013c), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of cumene. Cumene was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 by the Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Cumene is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Cumene is a phenyl compound that is mainly used in the production of phenol, phenol derivatives, and acetone. To a lesser extent, it is used as a thinner in paints and lacquers and it is part of petroleum-based solvents (NTP, 2013; Bauer and Buettner, 2023). It is naturally present in petroleum and therefore in gasoline and might be added in gasoline blending. Environmental occurrence is mainly in air; it has been reported to be released from fires (Austin et al., 2001). The general population is mainly exposed via the air and, to a much lesser extent, via consumer products and food or water (Martins et al., 2010; NTP, 2013). The NTP RoC found that overall reported urban atmospheric cumene levels were 14.7 µg/m<sup>3</sup>, while reported levels in workers performing various tasks in manufacturing and processing cumene could be as high as 150 000 µg/m<sup>3</sup> (NTP, 2013).

### Cancer in humans

No studies on cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the last evaluation of cumene (IARC, 2013c), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of cumene. In addition, there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of its metabolite,  $\alpha$ -methylstyrene. Cumene was tested for carcinogenicity in a 2-year study conducted by the NTP in both sexes of mice and rats exposed by inhalation (NTP, 2009).

### Mechanistic evidence

In the last evaluation of cumene (IARC, 2013c), there was *moderate* evidence that a mutational mechanism underlies the development of cumene-induced lung tumours in rodents (Rosman et al., 1986; Hong et al., 2008; Wakamatsu et al., 2008). This conclusion was based on the findings that mouse lung tumours had an elevated frequency of mutations in the KRAS and TRP53 genes, and at least one mutagenic metabolite of cumene ( $\alpha$ -methylstyrene oxide) has been found in rats and mice (Gollapudi et al., 2021). Additional studies evaluated in the NTP RoC (NTP, 2013), which listed cumene as “reasonably anticipated to be a human carcinogen”, showed that although cumene was not mutagenic or genotoxic in most of the standard assays in vitro and in vivo, single-cell gel electrophoresis provided evidence that cumene caused DNA damage in the liver of male rats and the lungs of female mice (NTP, 2012a).  $\alpha$ -Methylstyrene was not mutagenic in bacteria (NTP, 2007b), but there is evidence that it causes chromosomal damage in rodents and cultured cells, and its proposed metabolite,  $\alpha$ -methylstyrene oxide, is mutagenic in bacteria. Therefore, some evidence exists for a genotoxic mechanism of action for cumene (presumably via its conversion to  $\alpha$ -methylstyrene or to other metabolites). Other evidence suggests that cumene can cause cell proliferation and epigenetic effects, as observed through microarray analysis in tumour and normal tissues from mice

(Wakamatsu et al., 2008). No other data on human primary cells or exposed humans relating to cumene were identified.

### Summary

No studies on cancer in humans and cumene exposure were available. New mechanistic evidence relevant to the KCs in experimental systems is available. However, the lack of mechanistic information from human primary cells or tissues or exposed humans would probably preclude a reclassification of the agent. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cumene is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 176 Dichloromethane (CAS No. 75-09-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Dichloromethane (methylene chloride) has been evaluated previously by the *IARC Monographs* programme (IARC, 1987a, 1999d, 2017b) and is classified as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals and *limited* evidence for cancer in humans, specifically of cancer of the biliary tract and NHL. FAO/WHO (1992) recommended that dichloromethane should be limited to its current uses (as an extraction solvent for spice oleoresins and the decaffeination of coffee and tea, and for food additives in which previous specifications drawn up by the Committee covered residues of dichloromethane). WHO has also made an assessment in relation to dichloromethane in drinking-water (WHO, 1993).

Dichloromethane was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, there remains extensive use of and exposure to dichloromethane, particularly in occupational settings. For example, dichloromethane has been extensively used as a paint stripper, but this use is currently being restricted due to acute poisonings via inhalation. Dichloromethane is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a).

### Cancer in humans

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, there are new studies available for several cancer types, but the evidence does not appear to have changed substantially since the previous evaluation.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In *Monographs* Volume 110 (IARC, 2017b), there was *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### Mechanistic evidence

New studies relevant to KCs are available, particularly on whether dichloromethane is genotoxic and induces oxidative stress. However, there are few such studies in exposed humans (e.g. Mimaki et al., 2016; Zeljezic et al., 2016).

## Summary

Bearing in mind the current classification of dichloromethane in Group 2A, the Advisory Group concluded that the evidence published since the previous evaluation in 2017 would be unlikely to lead to a change in classification and therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of dichloromethane is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 177 Isoprene (CAS No. 78-79-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Isoprene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d). Isoprene was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of cancer in several tissues in mice and rats, its chemical structural similarity to 1,3-butadiene (a Group 1 carcinogen), and mechanistic evidence of adduct formation and genotoxicity.

### Exposure characterization

Isoprene is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Isoprene is used as a chemical intermediate to manufacture primarily polymers, which occurs in closed production systems. Greater than 95% of high-purity isoprene is used as a monomer to manufacture elastomers such as polyisoprene, styrenic thermoplastic elastomer block copolymers (styrene-isoprene-styrene), and butyl rubber (IARC, 1994c; ECHA, 2021a). In 2020, the isoprene market was expanding due to its increasing use in the synthetic rubber industry to produce tyres, conveyor belts, hoses, moulded rubber, and in medical equipment such as gloves and balloons (ECHA, 2021a). Isoprene is also used to manufacture specialty chemicals, intermediates, and derivatives, which are then used in the production of vitamins, pharmaceuticals, flavourings and perfumes, epoxy hardeners, and fuels (IARC, 1994c; Asghar and Masoon, 2020; ECHA, 2021a).

Isoprene--derived polymers are used in paint resins, tyres, footwear, adhesives, and motor oil viscosity improvers and an unknown percentage of unreacted monomer is present in the end-products. Exposure of the general population to isoprene is thought to be minimal (OECD, 2005; ECHA, 2021a). Occupational exposure to isoprene through inhalation (primarily) and dermal absorption could potentially occur at workplaces where isoprene or synthetic rubber is produced or used (ECHA, 2021a).

### Cancer in humans

In published studies, only risk estimates for rubber industry work as such were reported, and no risk estimates for isoprene could be assessed (ECHA, 2021a). No studies of workers exposed in the isoprene chemical industry or other cohort or case-control studies were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of isoprene.

### Mechanistic evidence

Isoprene is the 2-methyl analogue of 1,3-butadiene (a Group 1 carcinogen; IARC, 2012b). Similarly, to 1,3-butadiene, isoprene is metabolized to monoepoxide and diepoxide intermediates by hepatic CYP enzymes (particularly CYP2E1) of several species, including humans (IARC, 1999d).

Isoprene exhibits several KCs. In experimental systems, DNA adducts (2'-deoxyadenosine adducts and N7-guanine adducts) were measured in vitro (Begemann et al., 2004, 2011) and haemoglobin adducts in mice and rats (Anderson, 2001; Fred et al., 2005). In human primary cells, genotoxicity in human PBMCs (Fabiani et al., 2007, 2012) and formation of haemoglobin adducts in human erythrocytes (Tareke et al., 1998) have been reported. Genotoxicity was also described in human cell lines (Fabiani et al., 2012; Li et al., 2014b), and genetic alterations in the KRAS and HRAS proto-oncogenes were observed in isoprene-induced tumours of the Harderian gland and forestomach in mice (IARC, 2019a). In particular, tumours of the Harderian gland had a high frequency of KRAS A→T transversion mutations (Hong et al., 1997; Sills et al., 2001). The mutation profile was similar to that induced by 1,3-butadiene (Hong et al., 1997; Sills et al., 2001). Epigenetic changes were associated with inflammatory/oxidative stress response in human lung cells (BEAS-2B cells) exposed to secondary organic aerosols derived from isomeric isoprene epoxydiols (Eaves et al., 2020).

### Summary

No studies on isoprene exposure and human cancer were available. Isoprene is genotoxic and forms haemoglobin adducts in human primary cells and experimental systems, and it has a similar mutation profile to that of 1,3-butadiene (Group 1) in experimental animals. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of isoprene to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 178 Methanol (CAS No. 67-56-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Methanol has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Methanol was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a). The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of methanol (WHO, 1997).

### Exposure characterization

Methanol is a water-soluble compound used as a precursor in the production of various essential chemicals and consumer products. It serves as an industrial chemical with varied uses, e.g. as an additive in fuel and antifreeze, industrial solvent, denaturant, and paint stripper (IPCS 1988). It is also used in the synthesis of compounds such as formaldehyde, acetic acid, and methyl tertiary butyl ether (Samoto et al., 2006; IHS Chemical, 2016; Tabibian and Sharifzadeh, 2023). Methanol is listed as high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Methanol has been detected in workplace samples from a biodiesel manufacturing facility (Law et al., 2007) and plastics manufacturing (Kawai et al., 1992). In the general population, exposure occurs mainly through consumption of fermented beverages, fruits, fruit-based products, vegetables, which naturally contain methanol, and as a metabolite of the artificial sweetener aspartame (Group 2B). Children who consume substantial amounts of fruit purées may be particularly exposed to methanol (Gürler and Bayram, 2023). The daily exposure to methanol from all sources based on blood levels was estimated to be 0.13–1.03 g per day (Dhreshwar and Stella, 2008). The methanol content of some foods, such as alcoholic beverages, is regulated in many countries. Human exposure may also occur from methanol admixture in counterfeited or illegally manufactured alcohol products (unrecorded alcohol), which has regularly led to poisoning outbreaks with high morbidity and mortality (Lachenmeier et al., 2021).

## **Cancer in humans**

The only informative epidemiological study is a cancer mortality cohort study of 25 000 workers in the Republic of Korea exposed to methanol in their occupations (Min et al., 2019). Exposure metrics based on categorical job duration and workplace methanol exposure levels found lower cancer mortality rates among exposed workers compared with the general population, but with concern about healthy-worker bias. Furthermore, exposure was not individually measured but represented the median exposure level of all workers within the workplace.

## **Cancer in experimental animals**

A 2-year study with drinking-water containing methanol was conducted in Sprague-Dawley rats (Soffritti et al., 2002a). Dose-related increases of carcinomas of the head and neck, mainly in the ear ducts, in both sexes were reported. In addition, there were statistically significant increases of testicular interstitial cell hyperplasias and adenomas at the highest dose, an increase in sarcomas of the uterus at the highest dose, a dose-related increase in osteosarcomas of the head, and in haemolymphoreticular neoplasias in both sexes. In another study with oral administration (Apaja, 1980), increased incidence of malignant lymphoma was reported in both sexes in mice (IARC, 2019a). In studies of inhaled methanol in rat and mouse, no increase in neoplasms was found, even at high air levels that caused 10-fold increased blood methanol levels (NEDO, 1985a, b).

## **Mechanistic evidence**

Methanol is readily absorbed by all routes (inhalation, ingestion, or dermal exposure) and distributed in the body water (~0.7 L/kg) in exposed humans (Ashurst and Nappe, 2023). It undergoes extensive metabolism, and the majority is excreted as carbon dioxide, with small quantities excreted unchanged by the lungs and in the urine. In the liver, alcohol dehydrogenase oxidizes around 70–80% of methanol into formaldehyde, which is oxidized by aldehyde dehydrogenase to formic acid (WHO, 1997; Moon, 2017). Formic acid is not easily eliminated but mostly accumulates, and a small amount of formate interacts with folate to create carbon dioxide and water for exhalation (Ashurst and Nappe, 2023). In humans and primates, the toxicity of methanol is mediated through metabolites and not the parent molecule, because methanol is metabolized and does not accumulate as in rodents. Formic acid is considered to be the key toxicant, especially in the CNS.

Methanol is not considered to be a mutagen in humans (Public Health England, 2016). In contrast, formaldehyde, the main metabolite of methanol, increased the levels of chromosomal aberrations and DNA damage in a group of workers exposed to formaldehyde (Costa et al., 2015). Methanol can cause acute toxicity if ingested or inhaled, and dermal exposure can cause systemic toxicity in humans (Public Health England, 2016). Intraperitoneal administration of methanol does not lead to accumulation of oxidative DNA damage in bone marrow and spleen of mice, rabbits, or primates (McCallum et al., 2011). One study described decreases in various antioxidant enzymes after 15 and 30 days of methanol exposure in rats, suggesting that oxidative stress could occur in the hypothalamic–pituitary–adrenal axis (Parthasarathy et al., 2006).

Some acute inflammatory markers in nasal secretions (IL-8 and IL-1 $\beta$ ) were significantly increased after exposure of 12 healthy volunteers to 200 ppm of methanol for 4 hours (Mann et al., 2002). Soffritti et al. (2002a) reported lung inflammation present in dying rats. Immunosuppressive properties of methanol were investigated in experimental animals. In rats, an acute intoxication with methanol (1.0 LD<sub>50</sub>) reduced cellular and humoral immune responses and the blood concentration of immunoregulatory (IFN $\gamma$ , IL-2, IL-4) and pro-inflammatory (TNF, IL-1 $\beta$ , IL-6) cytokines (Zabrodskii et al., 2016). Another study in rats showed a huge decrease in corticosterone levels, a decrease of the cell-mediated immune response of footpad thickness, decreased neutrophil functions, and increased leukocyte migration inhibition (Parthasarathy et al.,



2006). Workers exposed to methanol had increased prevalence of a homozygous type of *TNF* gene and a heterozygous variant of the *CYP* gene (Dolgikh et al., 2013). These genetic changes were associated with decreased transcription of p53 protein and TNF receptor (Dolgikh et al., 2013).

Methanol perturbed the programmed cellular death pathway in workers exposed to methanol (Dolgikh et al., 2013). Methanol intoxication for 30 days induced apoptosis, measured as DNA fragmentation in rat hypothalamus, adrenal gland, and spleen (Parthasarathy et al., 2006). Methanol can inhibit cell differentiation and proliferation in the retina at the early developmental stage of zebrafish embryos exposed for 24 hours (Fu et al., 2017a). Finally, one study in exposed humans has reported chronic blood serum proteome changes in patients with methanol poisoning (Cejnar et al., 2022). The most important proteins were associated with blood coagulation, metabolism of vitamin A (increased retinol-binding protein), immune response (increased complement factors I, C3 and C5), and lipid transport (increased apolipoprotein A I and II, adiponectin).

### Summary

No evidence of human cancer was found for methanol. However, 70–80% of methanol absorbed is metabolized as formaldehyde, which is carcinogenic to humans (Group 1) (IARC, 2006a). There are data supporting potential carcinogenicity in experimental animals. There is evidence that methanol exhibits KCs, in particular immunosuppressive properties in exposed humans and experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of methanol to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 2.5 years)

## 179 *para*-Cresol (CAS No. 106-44-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

*para*-Cresol has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of cresols (WHO, 1995a).

### Exposure characterization

*para*-Cresol (4-hydroxytoluene, 4-methylphenol) is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Cresols are used as industrial solvents, to make synthetic resins, and in disinfectants and deodorizers, as well as to make other chemicals. They occur in foods, wood, tobacco smoke, crude oil, and coal tar. They are part of chemical mixtures such as creosote that can be used as wood preservatives. They also occur as bioproducts from organisms in soil and water (NCBI, 2024f). There is evidence that *para*-cresol may be formed by gut microbial flora (Al Hinai et al., 2019). Cresols are obtained by chemical synthesis or distillation from petroleum or coal tar (Dietz, 1991). They are widely used as disinfectants (Chang et al., 2014) and may also be found in some resins, pesticides, industrial solvents, wood preservatives, and tobacco smoke (Dietz, 1991). Occupational exposure may occur during production, and the general population may be exposed mainly via tobacco smoke, air pollution or contaminated water or soil (Dietz, 1991).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

An increased incidence of skin papilloma was observed among mice dermally exposed to any of the three cresol isomers following an initial application of dimethylbenzanthracene (Boutwell and Bosch, 1959). A 2-year study investigating a 60:40 mixture of *meta*- and *para*-cresol (selected to mimic the ratio of isomers

distilled from coke-oven tars) fed to rats and mice found no clear evidence of carcinogenicity; the only notable finding was an elevated incidence of forestomach squamous cell papilloma in female mice exposed at the highest concentration (10 000 ppm) (Sanders et al., 2009).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

As summarized in a Health Canada report (Health Canada, 2016), *para*-cresol was not mutagenic across strains of *S. typhimurium* with or without hamster or rat S9 (NTP, 1992b), increased chromosome aberrations in CHO cells (Anonymous, 2012), and did not increase SCE in human fibroblasts (Cheng and Kligerman, 1984). A 60:40 mixture of *meta*- and *para*-cresol did not affect the frequencies of micronucleated erythrocytes in peripheral blood from male or female mice in 13-week studies conducted by the NTP (NTP, 1992b). On the other hand, there is evidence that *para*-cresol is genotoxic in HT-29 and Caco-2 colorectal carcinoma cell lines (Al Hinai et al., 2019). A study of *para*-cresol in the human hepatocyte cell line HepaRG demonstrated exposure-dependent changes in measures of oxidative stress, GSH depletion, and cellular necrosis (Zhu et al., 2021c). A 2-year study with male rats and female mice observed exposure-related kidney and thyroid toxicity, as well as non-neoplastic lesions in the respiratory tract and liver (NTP, 2008). *para*-Cresol also promoted the invasion and migration of human bladder cancer TSGH830 cells (Hsu et al., 2019) and HepG2 human liver cancer cells (Chen et al., 2023c).

### **Summary**

No studies on cancer in humans were available. There is sparse evidence of cancer in experimental animals and mechanistic evidence of carcinogenicity for *para*-cresol. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of *para*-cresol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **180 Sulfolane (CAS No. 126-33-0)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Sulfolane has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

Sulfolane is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). In 2003, it was estimated that global production was approximately 13 300 tons per year (OECD, 2004). Other estimates suggest global production of 18 000–36 000 tonnes per year (Thompson et al., 2013). Sulfolane is primarily used in the oil and gas industry and acid gas purification, as a solvent to extract aromatic hydrocarbons (80% of usage). It is used in several other processes including hydrocarbon fractionation, electronics, and textiles manufacturing, as a plasticizer, pharmaceutical industry, jet ink printing, and component in hydraulic fluid and as a curing agent for epoxy resins (OECD, 2004). A newer use has been noted in the manufacture of lithium-ion batteries (Li et al., 2023b). It is a metabolite of the drug busulfane, which is used for the treatment of myelofibrosis (Dadkhah et al., 2022). OECD (2004) noted occupational exposures during drum filling as part of the production of the chemical and potential exposures for downstream users. It was also noted that sulfolane has been found in “significant amounts in water, groundwater and vegetation” near production areas, suggesting exposure via drinking-water and food crop ingestion from environmental releases (OECD, 2004).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group. A chronic toxicity study involving rats and mice is in progress at the US NTP (NTP, 2024d).

### Mechanistic evidence

The genotoxicity of sulfolane has been evaluated in various experimental systems *in vitro*, yielding predominantly negative results (US EPA, 2012a). Animal studies have identified reproductive/developmental and immunological effects related to sulfolane exposure. A study of rats exposed to sulfolane during preconception, gestation, and lactation identified increased litter loss, reduced litter size and lower pup weights at doses  $\geq 200$  mg/kg per day (OECD, 2004). Increased fetal resorptions and skeletal anomalies in prenatal mice with exposure have also been reported (Zhu et al., 1987). Mild to moderate decreases in leukocyte count with exposure have been observed in several animal studies (ATSDR, 2011). In Sprague-Dawley rats, evidence of decreased NK cell activity in spleen cells from F1 females but not males was seen after developmental exposure (Watson et al., 2021).

### Summary

No studies on cancer in humans were available. No evidence of carcinogenicity of sulfolane in experimental animals was identified and there is no clear mechanistic evidence for any KCs. The Advisory Group recommended that the priority of this chemical be reconsidered after the NTP bioassay data become available.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 181 Tetrachloroethylene (perchloroethylene) (CAS No. 127-18-4)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Tetrachloroethylene (perchloroethylene) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in Volume 106 in 2012 (IARC, 2014b), on the basis of *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (for bladder cancer) and *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Tetrachloroethylene was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new human cancer evidence. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of tetrachloroethylene (WHO, 1984).

### Exposure characterization

Tetrachloroethylene is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Tetrachloroethylene is a chlorinated solvent which has been used in degreasing in the metal industry and other industries (IARC, 2014b). It has been widely used as a solvent in dry cleaning. Co-exposure to other solvents might occur; for example, trichloroethylene was also used in dry cleaning before being phased out due to health concerns (Callahan et al., 2019). Tetrachloroethylene does not occur naturally but is a widespread environmental contaminant due to its uses, including industrial releases (IARC, 2014b). Occupational exposure occurs mainly via inhalation, while the general population may be exposed via the air and contaminated drinking-water or food.

A review of exposure levels (Gold et al., 2008) found that the overall arithmetic mean exposure in workers undertaking degreasing tasks was 95 ppm (range 0–1800,  $n = 206$ ). The mean for personal tetrachloroethylene exposures in the dry-cleaning industry was 59 ppm (range: 0–4636,  $n = 1395$ ), with the highest levels found in machine operators who transferred wet garments to a dryer (arithmetic mean = 150 ppm, range 0–1000,  $n = 441$ ). High levels of tetrachloroethylene exposure were also seen in

cleaning mining equipment, testing coal, cleaning animal coats in taxidermy, and cleaning and duplicating film.

### **Cancer in humans**

Since the most recent *Monographs* evaluation of tetrachloroethylene, some additional studies on tetrachloroethylene exposure and various cancer sites have been published. Concerning bladder cancer, an extended follow-up of a cohort of dry cleaners in the USA found an exposure–response relation with solvent exposure and bladder cancer. HRs were 4.2 (95% CI, 0.7–24.5) in the medium exposure group and 9.2 (95% CI, 1.1–76.7) for high exposure, based on 5 and 3 cases, respectively (Callahan et al., 2019). One additional new study assessed health outcomes in a cohort of microelectronic and business machine manufacturing workers in the USA (Silver et al., 2014). There was no association between tetrachloroethylene exposure and bladder cancer. In a new case–control study performed using the Nordic Occupational Cancer Database, Hadkhale et al. (2017) estimated cumulative occupational exposures using a job–exposure matrix and found a significant positive association between tetrachloroethylene exposure (measured based on job titles) and bladder cancer in the medium but not the highest exposure category (HR, 1.12; 95% CI, 1.02–1.23 and HR, 0.94; 95% CI, 0.73–1.22, respectively).

More than a dozen new studies for other cancer sites such as liver, kidney, breast, and head and neck, and for NHL and CLL, for which the evidence had been evaluated as *inadequate* by the previous Working Group, have been published. There are few new studies for each cancer site, with mixed results of some positive and some null associations between tetrachloroethylene exposure and cancer risk.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the last evaluation of tetrachloroethylene (IARC, 2014b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of tetrachloroethylene.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

In the last evaluation of tetrachloroethylene, it was noted that its metabolic activation via the GSH-conjugation pathway leads to the formation of genotoxic metabolites. Since then, the genotoxicity of tetrachloroethylene has been intensively investigated (Lovell, 2010), with several studies in exposed humans.

Azimi et al. (2017) examined 33 dry cleaners and 26 controls, conducting comet assay on peripheral blood lymphocyte samples. A significant increase in primary DNA damage was seen among the exposed individuals (dry cleaners) versus the non-exposed. However, no correlation was determined between the duration of employment and DNA damage (Azimi et al., 2017). One biomonitoring study collected personal air samples and peripheral blood from 59 volunteers (30 exposed dry-cleaning workers and 29 controls) and showed that dry cleaners had higher micronucleus frequency and DNA damage, measured by comet assay, compared with the control group. Also, there was a significant association between chromosome aberrations and employment duration and frequency of exposure (Everatt et al., 2013). A smaller study with 18 dry-cleaning workers and 18 laundry workers (unexposed controls) showed no significant difference between the tetrachloroethylene-exposed dry cleaners and the laundry workers for chromosome translocation frequencies, but tetrachloroethylene levels were significantly correlated with percentage of cells with acentric fragments (Tucker et al., 2011). However, another study found that women exposed to tetrachloroethylene while working in dry-cleaning shops had lower levels of oxidative DNA damage than launderers without tetrachloroethylene exposure, although the exposure levels in this study were well below recommended exposure limits (Toraason, et al., 2003).

## Summary

A growing number of studies show associations between occupational exposure to tetrachloroethylene and bladder cancer, with new studies since the last evaluation. Most studies mainly include dry cleaners or other workers, and one recent study shows a dose–response relation. Some informative studies that are in progress may not become available within 5 years. (Any evaluation of tetrachloroethylene may also benefit from a re-evaluation of dry cleaning as an occupation, which is currently classified in Group 2B). For all other cancer sites, results are inconclusive. A small number of mechanistic studies suggest that tetrachloroethylene is genotoxic in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of tetrachloroethylene to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 182 Xylenes (CAS No. 1330-20-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Xylenes have previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d).

### Exposure characterization

Xylenes are listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Xylenes are a group of aromatic hydrocarbons consisting of *ortho*-, *meta*- and *para*-xylene, and these compounds are often quantified as part of the group of “benzene, toluene, xylene” (BTX). Xylenes are colourless liquids occurring naturally in petroleum and coal (ATSDR, 2007).

Xylene is widely used in industry and medical technology as a solvent. The main applications are in the printing, rubber, and leather industries. It is also used as a cleaning agent, a thinner for paint, and in paints and varnishes. It is found in small amounts in aeroplane fuel, gasoline, and cigarette smoke (Kandiyala et al., 2010). In the biomedical field, xylene is used in histological laboratories for tissue-processing, tissue-staining, and coverslipping, and also in endodontic retreatment as a guttapercha solvent (Kandiyala et al., 2010). In addition to occupational exposure, human contact may result from soil contaminated by leaking underground storage tanks containing petroleum products. Xylene can leak into the soil, surface water or groundwater (Kandiyala et al., 2010). Xylene is present in combustion emissions (Alberta Environment, 2004). The general population can be exposed via air pollution from combustion emissions.

### Cancer in humans

There was *inadequate* evidence for cancer in humans in the previous IARC evaluation of xylene (IARC, 1999d). Data from a retrospective cross-sectional study from NHANES, investigating the relation between volatile organic aromatic compounds in the blood across adulthood and mortality, identified a higher risk of cancer among participants with exposure to benzene, ethylbenzene, and *ortho*-xylene (Malik et al., 2022; and Li et al., 2022d). Other population-based case–control studies have provided suggestive evidence that occupational exposure to one or more of the BTX agents may be associated with cancers of the lung, prostate, and bladder (Blanc-Lapierre et al., 2018; Warden et al., 2018; Xie et al., 2024b). Sporadic positive associations have been reported for other cancer sites and exposure to xylenes.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In 1985 the NTP conducted a carcinogenicity study of technical-grade xylenes (60% *meta*-xylene, 14% *para*-xylene, 9% *ortho*-xylene, 17% ethylbenzene) administered by oral gavage to rats and mice. No increased incidence of tumours with exposure was observed in either mice or rats (NTP, 1986c). No

additional carcinogenicity studies were available to the Advisory Group, but another NTP bioassay is underway with a different route of administration.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

A Substance Evaluation Conclusion document published by the ECHA in 2021 provided a summary of the findings from 30 studies investigating the genotoxicity of xylenes across a range of test systems in vitro and in vivo (ECHA, 2021b). Most studies suggested no evidence of genotoxicity. One exception was a study that conducted comet assay testing of human peripheral blood lymphocytes in vitro and observed exposure-related increases in DNA damage for *meta*-xylene, *para*-xylene, and *ortho*-xylene (Chen et al., 2008). The ECHA report noted some limitations in the design of this study, including the lack of a standardized evaluation of comet tail length, lack of use of a metabolic activation system, and absence of historical controls. In a genotoxicity study of xylenes in human promyelocytic leukaemia cells, not included in the ECHA report, dose-related increases in cell apoptosis, ROS generation, and DNA damage were observed. Pre-treatment with the ROS scavenger *N*-acetylcysteine weakened the effects of xylenes, suggesting that ROS play a major role in inducing xylene-related cell damage (Sarma et al., 2011).

### **Summary**

Positive findings for human cancer are only sporadic, and the exposure was not specific to xylene. There is no evidence of cancer in experimental animals and no sufficient mechanistic evidence of genotoxicity or other KCs. The evidence to date is unlikely to support a change in classification, but the Advisory Group recommended that the priority of this chemical should be reconsidered after the NTP bioassay data become available.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## **183 Diisononyl cyclohexane-1,2-dicarboxylate (DINCH) (CAS No. 166412-78-8)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Diisononyl cyclohexane-1,2-dicarboxylate (DINCH) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### **Exposure characterization**

DINCH is commonly used as a plasticizer and is found in products ranging from food packaging and children's toys to medical materials such as infusion tubes and blood bags, as well as in printing inks, paints, and textile coatings. DINCH has been increasingly used as a substitute for traditional phthalates following regulatory restrictions for these compounds (Schaffert et al., 2021). Since its introduction in 2002, the production of DINCH has seen a noticeable growth (200 000 tonnes per year in 2014 (BASF SE, 2014)), reflecting its rising adoption across various industries. This widespread application in everyday products has led to frequent detection of DINCH metabolites in human urine samples, suggesting extensive exposure among the general population (Vogel et al., 2023a, b).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

A series of studies with intravenous injection or intravenous infusion of DINCH to rats did not reveal any apparent systemic effects (David et al., 2015). In addition, several unpublished GLP studies were

conducted according to the most recent OECD guidelines. Exposure of rats to DINCH at various doses and exposure regimes did not cause any pathology related to increased cancer risk (EFSA, 2006b; Bhat, et al., 2014).

### Mechanistic evidence

One prospective cohort study suggested that urinary concentrations of a DINCH metabolite was inversely correlated with estradiol levels among women undergoing in vitro fertilization treatments (Mínguez-Alarcón et al., 2016). In experimental systems, DINCH activates the human nuclear receptors ER $\alpha$ , ER $\beta$ , AR, PPAR $\alpha$ , and PPAR $\gamma$  (Engel et al., 2018; Campioli et al., 2019). The naturally occurring metabolite of DINCH, the monoisononyl ester known as MINCH, induced cellular stress and pro-inflammatory effects in human macrophages (Schaffert et al., 2021).

DINCH and MINCH did not directly affect differentiation of rat cells in vitro, while in these cells MINCH affected the expression of Cebpa and Fabp4, inducing preadipocytes to accumulate lipids and fully differentiate into mature adipocytes (Campioli et al., 2015).

DINCH induced oxidative DNA damage in HepG2 liver cells. No marked chromosomal damage was noted after short-term or longer treatment of liver and kidney cell lines, estimated by micronuclei (Vasconcelos et al., 2019). DINCH and MINCH induced mitochondrial dysfunction, increased ROS, and enhanced inflammatory responses in human THP-1 macrophages (Schaffert et al., 2021). DINCH was not mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* strains TA98, TA100, TA1535, and TA1537 and *Escherichia coli* WP2 *uvrA* with or without rat liver S9 (Bhat et al., 2014). Results were also negative in a forward gene mutation assay at the HPRT locus in CHO cells with or without rat liver S9 mix. DINCH failed to induce structural chromosomal aberrations in V79 Chinese hamster lung cells with or without rat liver S9 mix (Bhat et al., 2014). Micronucleated polychromatic erythrocytes (PCE) were not observed in the bone marrow of male NMRI mice given a single intraperitoneal injection of DINCH (Bhat et al., 2014).

### Summary

No human cancer studies were available, and the existing studies of cancer in animals did not show carcinogenic effects for DINCH. There is sparse mechanistic evidence for DINCH and its metabolite MINCH in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of diisononyl cyclohexane-1,2-dicarboxylate is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 184 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene (pyrocatechol) (CAS No. 120-80-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

1,2-Dihydroxybenzene (pyrocatechol) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d).

### Exposure characterization

1,2-Dihydroxybenzene is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (OECD, 2007; US EPA, 2024a). 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene is used as a photographic developer, a developer for fur dyes, as an intermediate for antioxidants in rubber and lubricating oils, in polymerization inhibitors, and in the pharmaceuticals industry mainly in small quantities as a laboratory reagent for raw material testing (IARC, 1999d; Environment Canada, 2007a). It is also used as an antioxidant in electroplating baths, where it is destroyed (oxidized) during the process (Environment Canada, 2007b). 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene also has cosmetic applications such as in hair dyes, perfumes, and essential oils (IARC, 1999d; NICNAS, 2014).

1,2-Dihydroxybenzene can be absorbed by inhalation of an aerosol, by ingestion and through the skin. The major exposure routes for the general population are consumption of contaminated drinking-water and ingestion of contaminated food (US EPA, 2000b). Occupational exposure to 1,2-dihydroxybenzene may occur during its manufacture and use, if adequate control measures to minimize exposure to the chemical are not implemented (NICNAS, 2014).

### **Cancer in humans**

In an untargeted metabolomic analysis performed on prediagnostic plasma samples from a case–cohort study of 1695 incident breast cancer cases and a subcohort of 1983 women drawn from the Cancer Prevention Study, an association was found between catechol glucuronide (a 1,2-dihydroxybenzene metabolite) and increased breast cancer risk (Stevens et al., 2023).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 1,2-dihydroxybenzene. Since then, additional carcinogenesis studies with 1,2-dihydroxybenzene in rats have been conducted, in which glandular stomach tumours were observed (Hirose et al., 1999; Hagiwara et al., 2001). 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene co-administered with *N*-diethylnitrosamine induced forestomach and glandular tumours (Kobayashi et al., 1997, 1999; Yafune et al., 2014), and forestomach initiation treatment followed by 1,2-dihydroxybenzene caused forestomach tumours (Taniai et al., 2012; Kobayashi et al., 1999).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

1,2-Dihydroxybenzene induces oxidative DNA damage in human HL-60 and HP100 cells (Oikawa et al., 2001). Dietary catechol caused increased oxidative DNA damage in livers of mice treated with acetaminophen (Ishii et al., 2009). Subacute co-exposure to 1,2-dihydroxybenzene and sodium nitrite increased levels of 8-OHdG in rat forestomach epithelium, followed by epithelial injury and hyperplasia (Ishii et al., 2006). 1,2-Dihydroxybenzene alters cell proliferation and the cell cycle. In vivo cell-cycle fluctuations, cell proliferation, and hyperplasia have been observed in rats (Hirose et al., 1999; Hagiwara et al., 2001; Taniai et al., 2012).

### **Summary**

Little evidence of cancer in humans is available. There is already *sufficient* evidence that 1,2-dihydroxybenzene causes cancer in experimental animals. Several studies show data for genotoxicity, oxidative DNA damage, and cell proliferation in experimental systems in vitro and in vivo. However, no evidence is available for exposed humans or human primary cells or tissues. Thus, a change in classification is unlikely, and the Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of 1,2-dihydroxybenzene is unwarranted at present

**Recommendation:** No priority

## **185 1,4-Dioxane (CAS No. 123-91-1)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

1,4-Dioxane has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.



### Exposure characterization

1,4-Dioxane is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). 1,4-Dioxane is a clear, colourless liquid with a faint sweet odour. It can dissolve a wide range of substances and is primarily used as a solvent stabilizer for chlorinated solvents in various industries (IARC, 1999d). It is used mainly in the production of rubber and plastics. Moreover, 1,4-dioxane can be produced as a by-product and impurity in certain chemical processes, including the production of polyethylene terephthalate, consumer detergents, industrial detergents, and cleaning compounds. Environmental presence of dioxane is primarily attributed to wastewater and air discharges at sites involved in its production, processing, and utilization (Godri Pollitt et al., 2019; Adamson et al., 2017). Elevated levels of 1,4-dioxane have been detected in landfill leachates arising from materials containing this compound in landfills (Mohr, 2020). Exposure to 1,4-dioxane occurs through occupational exposure, consumer products, or contact with water, land, or air where 1,4-dioxane has been released (Doherty et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

No new informative epidemiological studies have been conducted since *IARC Monographs* Supplement 7 (IARC, 1987a). The only study in humans with cancer data is Buffler et al. (1978).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of 1,4-dioxane. Since that evaluation, two cancer bioassays on the carcinogenicity of 1,4-dioxane by oral administration in mice and rats (Kano et al., 2009), and one by inhalation in rats (Kasai et al., 2009) have been published.

### Mechanistic evidence

Mechanistic data are available only in experimental systems, not in human primary cells (or tissue) or exposed humans. The US EPA reviewed more than 40 studies on genotoxicity of 1,4-dioxane and concluded that “there is some evidence for genotoxicity in vivo at high doses, but there is insufficient evidence to conclude that 1,4-dioxane is mutagenic or induces cancer through a mutagenic mode of action” (US EPA, 2020b). 1,4-Dioxane forms DNA adducts in the liver of gpt-deficient rats (Totsuka et al., 2020). In a recent review, Lafranconi et al. (2023) concluded that the mode of carcinogenic action of 1,4-dioxane in rodents is dependent on metabolic or clearance saturation of absorbed 1,4-dioxane, direct mitotic response, and induction of Cyp2E1 activity and oxidative stress that led to some genotoxicity and cytotoxicity followed by sustained proliferation. A number of studies have investigated non-genotoxic mechanisms of 1,4-dioxane in experimental systems (e.g. Gi et al., 2018; Chappell et al., 2021).

### Summary

No new evidence from epidemiological studies of cancer in humans was found. There is *sufficient* evidence that 1,4-dioxane causes tumours in experimental animals supporting its Group 2B classification. There is no new mechanistic information related to the KCs in studies in exposed humans or human primary cells or tissues. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of 1,4-dioxane is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 186 2,3-Butanedione (CAS No. 431-03-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,3-Butanedione (commonly known as diacetyl) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. 2,3-Butanedione was evaluated in 1998 by the JECFA, which determined that there was no safety concern at current levels of intake when it is used as a flavouring agent (FAO/WHO, 1998b). 2,3-Butanedione was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of bioassay and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

2,3-Butanedione is commonly used in the production of artificial flavour formulations, the production of which exceeds 18 tonnes per year in Europe and 42 tonnes per year in the USA (WHO TRS 891, 2000). Examples of flavoured food products containing the compound include cake mixes, flour, beer, wine, margarines and soft spreads, cheese, confectionery, bakery products, crackers, popcorn, cookies, ice cream, and frozen foods. 2,3-Butanedione is “generally recognized as safe (GRAS)” by the US FDA for use in foods. It also occurs naturally in butter, various fruits, coffee, honey, and other foods and as a fermentation by-product in wine, beer, and dairy products. Non-occupational exposure to 2,3-butanedione is primarily by ingestion, whereas occupational exposure to 2,3-butanedione occurs mainly by inhalation of vapours (NIOSH, 2016a). Inhalation exposure may also occur from tobacco smoking, and use of electronic cigarettes and flavoured tobacco products (NTP, 2018d; IARC, 2019a).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

2,3-Butanedione exposure by inhalation induced SCCs of the nasal mucosa in male and female rats, while in female mice it induced a non-significant number of nasal adenocarcinomas (NTP, 2018d). In female mice, intraperitoneal injection of 2,3-butanedione led to a dose-dependent increase in the incidence and multiplicity of lung tumours, an effect not observed in male mice (Stoner et al., 1973). In a mouse model of progression of non-alcoholic steatohepatitis to HCC, 2,3-butanedione, identified by non-target profiling analysis among faecal volatile organic compounds, was associated with tumour appearance (Kato et al., 2023).

### Mechanistic evidence

There is evidence that 2,3-butanedione is electrophilic. When incubated with *N*- $\alpha$ -acetylarginine, 2,3-butanedione formed ring-opened and cyclic adducts with the guanidine nitrogens (Mathews et al., 2010). There is evidence that 2,3-butanedione is genotoxic. It induced a highly mutagenic response in the L5178Y mouse lymphoma mutation assay in the presence of human liver S9 for activation: there was an increased frequency of small colonies with multiple loci on chromosome 11 in addition to functional loss of the thymidine kinase locus (Whittaker et al., 2008). Exposure of human liver THLE2 cells to 2,3-butanedione caused DNA damage, indicated by an increase in tail length, tail DNA%, and tail moment (Salama et al., 2023). 2,3-Butanedione was mutagenic in *S. typhimurium* strains TA100, TA102, and TA104 (with and without rat liver S9 activation). It is also mutagenic in mouse lymphoma L5178 tk<sup>+/−</sup> cells in the presence of human liver S9 (NTP, 2018d). Mitotic chromosome loss was induced by 2,3-butanedione in *S. cerevisiae*, but only when combined with subacute concentrations of propionitrile, which is a strong inducer of chromosomal segregation (Zimmermann and Mohr, 1992).

Ingestion of 2,3-butanedione by rats disrupted the liver oxidant/antioxidant balance, as shown by alterations in levels of GSH, SOD, CAT, GPX, GR, MDA, NO, and peroxynitrite, and increased levels of inflammatory cytokines (Salama et al., 2023). Administration of 2,3-butanedione by inhalation to male and female mice induced significant increases in neutrophil counts consistent with inflammation, squamous metaplasia of the respiratory epithelium, atypical hyperplasia and atypical squamous metaplasia of the bronchial epithelium, and metaplasia of the olfactory epithelium (NTP, 2018d). Using primary human airway epithelial cells and single-cell sequencing, it was shown that 2,3-butanedione decreased the proportion of basal cells expressing keratin 5, whereas the proportion of cells aligned to secretory cell clusters increased, that is associated with bronchiolitis obliterans, a fibrotic lung disease and thus relevant to KC6 (chronic inflammation) (Chu et al., 2024). In mice and rats treated with 2,3-butanedione, binding to albumin and haemoglobin through arginine caused bronchiolitis obliterans (Fennell et al., 2015). 2,3-Butanedione induced several pro-inflammatory molecules, including TNF $\alpha$ , cyclooxygenase-2, monocyte chemoattractant protein-1, and transforming growth factor- $\beta$ , in mouse macrophage RAW264.7 and Kupfer KFU5 cells (Kato et al., 2023). In addition, 2,3-butanedione increased EGFR-dependent IL-8 production in human lung mucoepidermoid carcinoma cells (Kelly et al., 2019), increased the EGFR ligand amphiregulin in the pulmonary epithelial cell line NCI-H292 and in primary human airway epithelial cells inhibiting a TNF $\alpha$ -converting enzyme by specific small inhibitor RNA (Kelly et al., 2014).

### Summary

There is no evidence for cancer in humans. There is evidence that 2,3-butanedione causes tumours in male and female rats and in female mice. There is substantial evidence that 2,3-butanedione exhibits KCs in experimental systems and in human primary cells. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2,3-butanedione to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 187 2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone (benzophenone-1) (CAS No. 131-56-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone (commonly known as benzophenone-1) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. 2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a). Benzophenone was classified by IARC as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B), with no data in humans and *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals (IARC, 2013c).

### Exposure characterization

2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone is a UVR blocker that is used in many cosmetic products (e.g. sunscreens, hair products, lipsticks, toothpastes, and nail polishes) as well as in paints and plastics, because it helps to prevent the degradation and discolouration of materials caused by UVR exposure (Yao et al., 2023b).

The following information concerns the group of benzophenones, because little specific information on 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone exposure was available to the Advisory Group. Benzophenones can be absorbed by the human body through various routes, including dermal absorption, inhalation, and oral ingestion. Studies have reported the occurrence of benzophenones in drinking-water, seafood, and packaged foods. Indoor air and indoor dust can also contribute to inhalation exposure to benzophenones (Yao et al., 2023b). According to Lu et al. (2018), the estimated average dermal intake of benzophenones (including

2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone) from personal care products in 280 schoolchildren in China was as high as 283 ng/kg bw per day.

Some studies have shown that benzophenones are present in human urine and blood (Zhang et al., 2022e), breast milk (Hines et al., 2015; Iribarne-Durán et al., 2022), semen (Hines et al., 2015), and adipose tissue (Wang et al., 2015). In a review of 158 studies, concentrations of 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone were up to 92.7 mg/L in urine, followed by blood (up to 0.9 mg/L) and milk (up to 0.8 mg L<sup>-1</sup>) (Mao et al., 2022). In analyses of maternal and fetal samples from China, Denmark, Spain, and the USA, 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone was widely found (Yao et al., 2023b).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans, for either 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone or benzophenones as a group, were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone has been reported to induce mutations in the TA97 and TA100 *S. typhimurium* strains in the absence of metabolic activation (S9 microsomes) (Wang et al., 2018c). There is some evidence that it disrupts the ER and AR signalling pathways in vitro. 2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone was also identified as a potent inhibitor of 17β-HSD3-dependent testosterone formation. It acts as a direct AR antagonist, suggesting that the agent causes synergistic effects in vivo by inhibiting testosterone synthesis and blocking AR activation (Nashev et al., 2010). 2,4-Dihydroxybenzophenone inhibits human, rat, and mouse gonadal 3β-hydroxysteroid dehydrogenases (Wang et al., 2023h). Liu et al. (2022g) observed dissemination of SKOV3 ovarian cancer cells in vitro after exposure to 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone. In fact, the agent promotes proliferation, migration, and invasion of SKOV3 cells by regulating epithelial–mesenchymal transitions (EMT), i.e. downregulating the ZO-1 gene and upregulating the MMP9 gene. The abnormal stimulation and progression of human SKOV3 ovarian cancer cells induced by 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone were mediated by activation of ERα which triggered crosstalk between the ERα and Wnt/β-catenin pathways (Liu et al., 2022g). In addition, 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone significantly promoted the growth of human ovarian cancer cells (BG-1 – an estrogen-dependent cell line) similarly to 17β-estradiol, as shown in a cell viability assay. The mechanism underlying BG-1 cell proliferation was proved to be related to the upregulation of cyclin D1 through ERα signalling, a cell cycle progressor. The agent also stimulated BG-1 (ovarian cancer cell) tumour growth in a xenograft mouse model (Park et al., 2013). In addition, Shin et al. (2016) showed that 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone promoted wound healing, presumably mediated by the ER-dependent pathway, in a migration assay in a BG-1 cell culture. In another study, In et al. (2015) observed migration of MCF-7 breast cancer cells after treatment with 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone, which was associated with increased expression of cyclin D1 and cathepsin and decreased expression of the senescence marker p21.

### **Summary**

No studies of cancer in humans or of cancer in experimental animals were available in relation to carcinogenicity of 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, modulation of receptor-mediated effects and cell proliferation in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2,4-dihydroxybenzophenone to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 188 2,4-Dimethylphenol (CAS No. 105-67-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,4-Dimethylphenol has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

2,4-Dimethylphenol (also named 2,4-xylenol, *meta*-xylenol or *meta*-4-xylenol) is a fungicide and disinfectant with a variety of agricultural uses as well as many industrial applications (solvent, disinfectant, bactericide) (Lewis et al., 2016). 2,4-Dimethylphenol is also used in making wetting agents, dyestuffs, phenolic antioxidants, pharmaceuticals, rubber chemicals, lubricants, gasoline additives, plasticizers, and a perfuming agent in the cosmetics industry. It is also used in the production of high-viscosity phosphate esters, as a feedstock for hindered phenol antioxidant and specialty modified phenolic resin manufacture (US EPA, 2007; ChemicalBook, 2023).

2,4-Dimethylphenol is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). In 2019, the volume of this chemical that was produced or imported into the USA was reported to be between 10 and 50 million pounds [4536–22 680 tonnes], under the Toxic Substances Control Act's Chemical Data Reporting mechanism (US EPA, 2024a).

2,4-Dimethylphenol is volatile and highly soluble in water. It is not expected to be persistent in soils (Lewis et al., 2016). The main routes of exposure are inhalation of ambient air, ingestion of fish, and dermal exposure by contact with products containing 2,4-dimethylphenol (US EPA, 2007; ChemicalBook, 2023). No information was available on environmental and occupational exposure levels.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

2,4-Dimethylphenol was tested for clastogenicity and for the ability to have spindle poison effects in NMRI mice using the micronucleus test method after oral administration (OECD, 2014). A single oral dose of 2,4-dimethylphenol did not increase the number of polychromatic erythrocytes containing small or large micronuclei. The rate of micronucleus formation was always in the same range as that of the negative controls in all dose groups and at all sacrifice intervals. No inhibition of erythropoiesis, determined from the ratio of polychromatic to normochromatic erythrocytes, was observed (ECHA, 2023f). 2,4-Dimethylphenol was assayed by the NTP in the Ames *Salmonella*/microsome mutagenicity assay and tested weakly positive in two of the tests and negative in one (Mortelmans et al., 1986, NTP, 2023f).

Bukowska et al. (2007) investigated potential effects of various phenols in generating oxidative stress and observed that 2,4-dimethylphenol induced an increase in the concentration- and time-dependent oxidation of H<sub>2</sub>DCFDA (fluorescent label 6-carboxy-2',7'-dichlorodihydrofluorescein diacetate) in human erythrocytes. The agent also induced an increase in carbonyl group content and changes in the denaturation of haemoglobin (parameter T), but not lipid peroxidation in human erythrocytes (Bukowska et al., 2007).

2,4-Dimethylphenol has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay (OECD, 2023), and was found to cause cells to significantly increase production of estradiol and progesterone (Cardona and Rudel, 2021). Increased production of these hormones can raise the risk of breast cancer and other types of hormone-responsive

cancers. The relation between hormone exposure—especially of E2 and progesterone—and breast cancer in experimental animals is well documented (Cogliano et al., 2011; Rudel et al., 2014).

### Summary

There is no evidence for cancer in humans or cancer in experimental animals. There is only sparse mechanistic evidence that 2,4-dimethylphenol exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, oxidative stress, and modulation of receptor-mediated effects; however, findings come mainly from a few experimental systems in vitro. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation 2,4-dimethylphenol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 189 2,4,6-Tribromophenol (CAS No. 118-79-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2,4,6-Tribromophenol (TBP) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

TBP is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). TBP is the most widely produced brominated phenol (Koch and Sures, 2018). It is used as an antiseptic and germicide; as a chemical intermediate in the production of its bismuth salt (antiseptic), pentachlorophenol, 2,4,6-tribromophenoxy compounds, and 2,4,6-tribromophenyl allyl ether; as a wood preservative; as a flame retardant intermediate; and as a reactive flame retardant.

Occupational exposure may occur in various workplaces, for example at electronics dismantling facilities, in the production of printed circuit boards, or among laboratory personnel (Thomsen et al., 2001). There is potential for consumer exposure to TBP through the consumption of foods (e.g. fish) and beverages that may contain it. There is potential for environmental exposure to TBP through its occurrence in ambient air (from combustion sources) and wastewater. The European Chemicals Agency noted that consumer exposure includes exposure from house dust and indoor air, as well as dermal or oral contact with consumer products (ECHA, 2016).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

In humans, TBP has been detected in blood serum, adipose tissue, placenta, breast milk and urine of environmentally and occupationally exposed individuals (Michałowicz et al., 2022). In a study of human PBMCs using the comet assay to assess DNA damage, TBP was found to exhibit moderate genotoxicity (Cardona and Rudel, 2021), and TBP was also observed to induce chromosome aberrations in a study of human lymphocytes (Alexander et al., 2012). It decreased the activity of antioxidant enzymes SOD and CAT in human erythrocytes (Jarosiewicz et al., 2019). TBP also induced the generation of ROS, as well as lipid and protein oxidation in human PBMCs (Włuka et al., 2020). In a study of Asian freshwater clams, exposure to TBP was observed to inhibit two antioxidant enzymes, *Gsts1* and *Gstm1* (Yan et al., 2017), suggesting an impact on oxidative stress. In mouse splenic lymphocytes, TBP was cytotoxic to B- and T-cell mitogenesis, suggesting potential immunosuppressive effects (Sakazaki et al., 2001). Data from a high-throughput assay

measuring hormone concentrations following exposure of human H295R adrenocortical carcinoma cells to TBP indicated increases in estradiol and progesterone. TBP had estrogen-like activity in a human MCF-7 breast cancer cell line (Olsen et al., 2002; Kay et al., 2024). TBP was also reported to bind to nuclear receptors, causing disturbance in thyroid hormone metabolism and transport in a human choriocarcinoma placenta cell line (Leonetti et al., 2018). Despite binding to estrogen receptors, TBP did not elicit any notable downstream effects, including stimulation of cell growth. However, it was reported to alter transduction pathways, including cellular calcium ion or transforming growth factor- $\beta$  signalling (Chen et al., 2017).

### Summary

Although TBP was nominated as a water disinfection by-product, the Advisory Group noted that this is not the main use or source of human exposure, as described above. There is no available evidence for cancer in humans or in experimental animals. There is only sparse evidence that the agent exhibits KCs including genotoxicity, induction of oxidative stress, immunosuppression, and modulation of receptor-mediated effects, mainly in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2,4,6-tribromophenol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 190 2-Hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone (CAS No. 131-57-7)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

2-Hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone (HMBP) (also known as oxybenzone) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. It was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

HMBP is widely used as a UVR filter in sunscreen formulations and in some industrial processes involving plastics. Human biomonitoring has shown high frequency of detection of HMBP in urine in the general population.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

The US NTP has conducted 2-year chronic toxicity and carcinogenicity studies of HMBP in rats and mice. These studies yielded equivocal evidence of carcinogenic activity of HMBP exposure in male Sprague-Dawley rats with incidence of brain and spinal cord malignant meningiomas. In female rats there was increased incidence of thyroid C-cell adenomas and increased incidence of uterine stromal polyps at only one of the intermediate doses. There was no evidence of carcinogenic activity in male or female B6C3F<sub>1</sub>/N mice at any of the exposure concentrations tested (NTP, 2020b).

### Mechanistic evidence

No evidence of genotoxic potential of HMBP is available. HMBP was included in the Tox21 and ToxCast programmes. The NTP 2020 technical report on HMBP toxicity mentions that cytotoxic concentrations of HMBP induced nuclear receptor activation (ER, PXR) and also showed induction of inflammatory cytokines (IL-1 $\alpha$ , CCL26).

## Summary

The Advisory Group noted that the newly available cancer bioassay from the NTP shows equivocal evidence of carcinogenicity. No studies were available of cancer in humans, and there is only sparse mechanistic evidence at present. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of 2-hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 191 Acetaldehyde (CAS No. 75-07-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Acetaldehyde has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1998 (IARC, 1999d), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. In 2009, acetaldehyde associated with consumption of alcoholic beverages was classified in Group 1 (IARC, 2012f). The IPCS has published an Environmental Health Criteria document on acetaldehyde (WHO, 1995b). Acetaldehyde was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of new epidemiological evidence on the association of acetaldehyde (as a metabolite of alcohol consumption) with gastric and hepatocellular cancers.

### Exposure characterization

Acetaldehyde is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). A major source of population exposure to acetaldehyde is its endogenous formation during alcohol metabolism by microbial flora in the oral cavity and digestive tract and as the first metabolite of ethanol oxidation in the liver and other tissues. The general population is exposed by ingestion of acetaldehyde as a natural compound in various foods and beverages, especially alcoholic beverages, and from use of consumer products such as alcohol-based mouthwash. Other important exposures include inhalation of polluted outdoor air (e.g. Xu et al., 2022b), indoor air (Chen et al., 2021b; Lunderberg et al., 2021; Villanueva et al., 2022; Yen et al., 2023), and tobacco smoke and vaping products (Landmesser et al., 2021; Nyakutsikwa et al., 2021; Zhou et al., 2021; Noël and Ghosh, 2022). Occupational inhalation exposure occurs in industrial manufacturing (Stefaniak et al., 2021), firefighting (Navarro et al., 2023a), restaurants (Le et al., 2022b), sewage and food waste treatment (Zhang et al., 2022f; Wang et al., 2023i; Zhang et al., 2023f), beauty salons (Choi et al., 2023), offices (Jung et al., 2022), and bakeries and pastry producers (Chang et al., 2018b; Miligi et al., 2023).

### Cancer in humans

In 2009, acetaldehyde associated with consumption of alcoholic beverages was classified in Group 1, with causal associations noted for cancers of the oesophagus and upper aerodigestive tract (oral cavity, pharynx, larynx) combined (IARC, 2012f). A pooled analysis of 12 case–control studies showed positive associations of head and neck cancer with long-term and frequent use of mouthwash (Boffetta et al., 2016). Another meta-analysis of 17 studies, which included Boffetta et al. (2016), showed a statistically significant correlation between frequent mouthwash use and squamous cell head and neck carcinoma (Hostiuc et al., 2021). Several studies found positive associations between early-life exposure to acetaldehyde as a component of air pollution and several childhood cancers (Shrestha et al., 2014; Heck et al., 2015; von Ehrenstein et al., 2016). A recent meta-analysis showed an exposure–response association (based on duration of use > 35 years and frequency of more than three times daily) between use of alcohol-containing mouthwash and risk of oral cancer (Carr and Aslam-Pervez, 2022). However, the use of alcohol-containing mouthwashes alone in the absence of other known risk factors such as smoking and drinking did not increase



the risk of oral cancer or lead to increased levels of salivary acetaldehyde. However, where other risk factors for oral cancer are present, the use of an alcohol-containing mouthwash may further increase this risk (Carr and Aslam-Pervez, 2022).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999d), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of acetaldehyde. An additional long-term study in rats has been published (Soffritti et al., 2002b). Administration of acetaldehyde to male and female rats in drinking-water increased the incidence of haemolymphoreticular cancer (leukaemia or lymphoma (combined)), benign tumours of the pancreas (islet-cell adenoma), and cancer of the bone (osteosarcoma) and nasal cavity (carcinoma) in male rats and benign mammary gland tumours (fibroma or fibroadenoma) in females. Increases in the incidence of tumours at other sites were observed only at one of the lower doses tested.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Acetaldehyde-specific DNA adducts have been characterized in experimental systems (Matsuda et al., 2007; Balbo et al., 2016), in human primary cells (Fang and Vaca, 1997), and in exposed humans (Wang et al., 2006; Balbo et al., 2012; Guidolin et al., 2021). For instance, ingestion of a moderate dose of alcohol led to a significant increase in *N*2-ethylidene-dG levels of up to 100 times the baseline value in cells of the oral cavity (Balbo et al., 2012); these authors pointed out the high intraindividual variability in DNA adduct formation induced by alcohol. The genotoxicity of acetaldehyde has recently been reviewed and indicates that acetaldehyde is genotoxic in experimental systems (ECHA, 2015; Rietjens et al., 2022).

The metabolism of alcohol via the CYP2E1 pathway leads to hepatic oxidative stress through the generation of ROS, including superoxide anion radicals and hydrogen peroxide. Acetaldehyde induces oxidative stress in experimental systems (Tamura et al., 2014; Srinivasan et al., 2021), human primary cells (Waris et al., 2020), and exposed humans (Tsermpini et al., 2022).

A recent evaluation of acetaldehyde as food-flavouring agent concluded that, in contrast to exposure to acetaldehyde via alcohol consumption, insufficient toxicokinetic, toxicity, and exposure data are available related to oral intake of acetaldehyde via food (Cartus et al., 2023). Also, it should be borne in mind that acetaldehyde is a product of normal metabolism in all living organisms, including humans, and that endogenous exposure may account for a major part of the overall exposome (Cheng et al., 2003; Rietjens et al., 2022).

### **Summary**

The evaluation for acetaldehyde is dichotomized by its association (or not) with alcohol consumption. For alcohol-associated acetaldehyde exposure, the classification has advanced to Group 1, and a robust body of research continues to explore the role of acetaldehyde from alcoholic beverage consumption in causing cancer. Some studies have evaluated acetaldehyde as part of air pollution and childhood leukaemia. Otherwise, no studies were identified of acetaldehyde exposure outside that associated with alcohol consumption or use of mouthwash. Use of alcohol-containing mouthwash is not independently associated with oral cancer in the absence of other known risk factors. If an evaluation is carried out, it may be advisable to separate the evaluation of direct acetaldehyde exposure from indirect exposure from use of mouthwash. There is already *sufficient* evidence that acetaldehyde causes tumours in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence that acetaldehyde exhibits KCs in exposed humans. As such, the mechanistic evidence could lead to a change of the current classification of acetaldehyde not associated with alcohol consumption, but a careful review would be needed to determine if the mechanistic evidence informs this exposure scenario. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of acetaldehyde to be warranted

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 192 Acrylamide (CAS No. 79-06-1)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Acrylamide has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in Volume 60 in 1994 (IARC, 1994c), on the basis of *inadequate* evidence of carcinogenicity in humans and *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity in animals. The JECFA conducted a risk assessment of acrylamide in food in 2011 and did not calculate an ADI, concluding that it is a genotoxic carcinogen (FAO/WHO, 2011c). Acrylamide was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities, on the basis of new evidence on cancers of the kidney, endometrium, and ovary in humans (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Acrylamide is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (OECD, 2007; US EPA, 2024a). Occupational exposure may occur via the dermal and inhalation routes in acrylamide, polyacrylamide and acrylamide copolymer production and in various industrial processes (e.g. production of paper, dyes, and plastics; drinking-water and wastewater treatment; grouting) (NCI, 2017). Acrylamide forms naturally in carbohydrate-rich foods during high-temperature cooking (e.g. frying, roasting, and baking) (EFSA, 2015b). High levels of acrylamide have been detected in fried potato products, in potato chips and snacks, and in dry coffee and coffee substitute products (EFSA, 2015b). Acrylamide is also present in cigarette smoke (EFSA, 2015b). For smokers, tobacco smoking is a greater source of exposure to acrylamide than food (NCI, 2017). The daily intake of acrylamide is estimated to range from 14 to 70 µg per day for adults in European, American, and Asian countries (Nehlig and Cunha, 2020). In Europe, average acrylamide exposure among adults did not increase significantly between 2000 and 2021 but still exceeded suggested benchmark levels. An increasing trend of acrylamide biomarker concentrations was found in children over the years 2014–2017 (Poteser et al., 2022).

### Cancer in humans

Since the most recent *IARC Monographs* evaluation in 1994, several epidemiological studies have examined the relation between estimated dietary consumption of acrylamide and specific cancer types, mostly with inconclusive or inconsistent results (Filippini et al., 2022; Başaran et al., 2023; Guth et al., 2023; Iwasaki et al., 2023). These results are subject to non-differential exposure misclassification, because of the difficulty in estimating dietary intake of acrylamide (as evidenced by non-concordance with estimates from biomarker-based methods of exposure assessment), resulting in likely bias of estimated effects towards the null. The evidence is suggestive of modest associations for cancers of the kidney (Pelucchi et al., 2015) and premenopausal breast (Adani et al., 2020; Bellicha et al., 2022); and for cancers of the oesophagus (SCC), endometrium, and ovary in never-smokers (Lin et al., 2011; Pelucchi et al., 2015; Adani et al., 2020; Bellicha et al., 2022), including in two meta-analyses (Pelucchi et al., 2015; Adani et al., 2020). Another recent meta-analysis found no association between dietary acrylamide and renal cell carcinoma among never-smokers (Jiang et al., 2020a). As smoking affects the metabolism of acrylamide to its carcinogenic metabolite glycidamide, never-smokers could experience a slightly positive association between dietary acrylamide and cancer risk that is not detectable in smokers (Schettgen et al., 2004; Filippini et al., 2022). Haemoglobin adducts of acrylamide or glycidamide were not associated with risks of cancer of the ovary or endometrium in non-smoking postmenopausal women in the USA (Xie et al., 2013) and in European cohort studies (Obón-Santacana et al., 2016), but were associated with risk of breast cancer in Japan (Iwasaki et al., 2023). Levels

of acrylamide and glycidamide haemoglobin adducts were positively associated with cancer mortality in the adult American population in an analysis of NHANES 2003–2014 data (Gu et al., 2022).

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1994c), there was *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals.

### Mechanistic evidence

In the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation (IARC, 1994c), there was *strong evidence* that acrylamide and its active metabolite glycidamide form covalent adducts with DNA and are genotoxic in experimental animals. Since then, several new studies have reported positive results on the clastogenic and mutagenic properties of acrylamide and glycidamide (Benford et al., 2022). In addition, further insight into the mechanisms underlying the mutagenic effects of acrylamide and glycinamide in exposed humans is available. Acrylamide is metabolized to glycidamide, which forms an *N*7-glycidamidoguanine DNA adduct in rodents. These adducts in the blood DNA of healthy human volunteers have been identified and quantified (Hemgesberg et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2022b). A unique mutational signature imprinted by acrylamide through the effects of its reactive metabolite glycidamide was found in one third of approximately 1600 tumour genomes corresponding to 19 human tumour types from 14 organs (Zhivagui et al., 2019). Hogervorst et al. (2007) observed statistically significant interactions between several SNPs in the HSD3B1/B2 gene cluster and acrylamide intake for ovarian cancer risk, suggesting that acrylamide may cause ovarian cancer through effects on sex hormones. There is evidence that acrylamide induces oxidative stress in experimental systems (Zhang et al., 2023g) and exposed humans (Piwowar et al., 2023).

Other studies have shown acrylamide-induced adipogenesis in cell cultures and various metabolic-related outcomes such as metabolic syndrome and increased prevalence of overweight in early childhood (Kadawathagedara et al., 2018; Wan et al., 2022).

### Summary

Since the previous classification, new evidence has been published of an association between non-occupational, mainly dietary, exposure to acrylamide and cancers of the breast, kidney, endometrium, and ovary in humans, but it is unclear whether this would reach *sufficient* evidence. There is already *sufficient* evidence that acrylamide causes tumours in experimental animals. There is evidence that acrylamide exhibits KCs in exposed humans. However, the available mechanistic evidence would support a re-evaluation only if additional mechanistic studies in exposed humans are published. Although the classification may not change overall, a determination of even *limited* evidence for some cancer types could have important public health implications. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of acrylamide to be warranted and recommended that it be evaluated together with glycidamide (agent 204).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 193 Atraric acid (methyl 3-methylorsellinate) (CAS No. 4707-47-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Atraric acid (methyl 3-methylorsellinate; methyl 2,4-dihydroxy-3,6-dimethylbenzoate) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Atraric acid is an anti-androgenic phenolic compound that is naturally derived from the bark of the African Plum tree *Prunus africana* (previously known as *Pygeum africanum*) or from *Stereocaulon japonicum* lichen (Bourgeois et al., 1999; Hoffman et al., 2013; Pulat et al., 2023). Atraric acid is used in perfumes (Li et al., 2022e), air fresheners, and food flavouring. *Prunus africana* has been used in African traditional medicine for the treatment of prostate cancer (Komakech et al., 2017). Extracts from the bark of the plant are also used in Europe and the USA as phytotherapeutic preparations to treat lower urinary tract symptoms and benign prostatic hyperplasia (Papaioannou et al., 2009). However, while the primary exposure to humans is in fragrances (Li et al., 2022e), there are no studies quantifying human exposure to atraric acid.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

Atraric acid was identified as an AR antagonist in an AR-responsive MMTV-Luc reporter gene assay, inducing repression of AR-mediated transactivation (Schleich et al., 2006). Atraric acid also has an agonistic effect on both the  $\alpha$ - and  $\beta$ -estrogen receptors (Hoffman et al., 2013).

Atraric acid has been screened in the US EPA ToxCast programme for induction of hormone synthesis in the in vitro H295R steroidogenesis assay (OECD, 2023) and was found to cause cells to significantly increase production of estradiol (E2) and weakly increase production of progesterone (Cardona and Rudel, 2021). Increased production of these hormones can raise the risk of breast cancer and other types of hormone-responsive cancers. The relation between hormone exposure—especially of E2 and progesterone—and breast cancer in experimental animals is well documented (Cogliano et al., 2011; Rudel et al., 2014).

### Summary

Human exposure to atraric acid is primarily through perfumes, although no quantitative data on this exposure exist. There are no human or animal cancer bioassay studies for atraric acid. There is little mechanistic evidence associating atraric acid with KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of atraric acid is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 194 Bromate compounds (including CAS No. 7758-01-2)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Potassium bromate has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 73 in 1998 (IARC, 1999b), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. WHO has assessed bromate in its drinking-water quality guidelines (WHO, 2005). The JECFA concluded that use of potassium bromate as a flour treatment agent is not acceptable (see FAO/WHO, 1995b). Bromate compounds were given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Bromate is a disinfection by-product that can be formed from the reaction of ozone or other oxidizing disinfectants with bromide present in water (Fawell and Walker, 2006). Bromate has been measured in both drinking-water and swimming-pool water and guideline values have been established by several national and international bodies, including WHO (2005). Bromate is added to flour to improve texture and volume of loaves (El Ati-Hellal et al., 2018). It is expected to be broken down when used in small quantities and proper baking practices are followed, but some countries have banned or limited the use of bromate compounds in flour. Bromate also has minor uses as a laboratory reagent and in explosives (IARC, 1999b). In a report on potassium bromate, Health Canada (2018) estimated that drinking-water is the main exposure source of bromate compounds in the Canadian general population and expected other sources such as food or cosmetics to be negligible.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of potassium bromate, based on findings of malignant tumours in both sexes of rats.

### Mechanistic evidence

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b) it was concluded that potassium bromate is genotoxic in experimental systems in vivo and in rodent cells in vitro. No conclusion could be drawn with respect to its mutagenicity to bacteria. Since then, the genotoxicity of potassium bromate has been more intensively investigated (Spassova et al., 2013). Potassium bromate induced chromosomal aberrations and micronucleus formation in human peripheral blood lymphocytes (Kaya and Topaktaş, 2007). Potassium bromate has been considered a suitable positive assay control for the Fpg- and hOGG1-modified comet assay because it produces high levels of oxidatively damaged DNA (Møller et al., 2020). In addition, potassium bromate induces oxidative DNA base damage in whole blood or lymphocytes ex vivo (Bausinger and Speit, 2016) and in fresh or stored leukocytes collected from salivary samples from healthy non-smokers (Fernández-Bertólez et al., 2021); in these studies, potassium bromate was used as a reference inducer of oxidative DNA damage. In addition, potassium bromate induces oxidative stress in human erythrocytes through the generation of ROS and alteration of the cellular antioxidant defence system (Ahmad et al., 2014).

### Summary

No studies on bromate exposure and human cancer were available. There is already *sufficient* evidence that potassium bromate causes cancer in experimental animals. There is evidence that potassium bromate induces KCs, including genotoxicity and induction of oxidative stress in human primary cells. These data could support a possible change in the current classification; the Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of bromate compounds is warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 195 Butyraldehyde (butanal) (CAS No. 123-72-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Butyraldehyde (also known as butanal) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

## Exposure characterization

Butyraldehyde is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2009a) and the US EPA (NCBI, 2024g). Japanese exports and imports in 2020 totalled 7887 and 5103 tonnes, respectively (JBRC, 2022a). Butyraldehyde is used primarily in the manufacture of various industrial products such as rubber accelerators, solvents, synthetic resins, high polymers, and plasticizers. It is also used as a flavouring agent in food products such as alcoholic beverages, baked goods, dairy products, gelatines, puddings, gravies, meat products, non-alcoholic beverages, and soft candies (NCBI, 2024g).

Workers are likely to encounter butyraldehyde in various industries, including health services and scientific research and development, where it is used in products such as pH regulators, water treatment products, and laboratory chemicals. Occupational exposure to butyraldehyde can occur through inhalation and dermal routes, primarily at manufacturing and user sites (ECHA, 2023a). Release to the environment of butyraldehyde is likely to occur from its use in consumer and industrial products (e.g. machine wash liquids, detergents, automotive care products, paints, coating or adhesives, fragrances, and air fresheners) (ECHA, 2023b).

## Cancer in humans

There are equivocal findings for oral cavity and respiratory cancers (all among smokers) in a small study of 150 workers (during 1967–1972) who were exposed to butyraldehyde and other aldehydes at a chemical plant in former East Germany (IARC, 1985). No other studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

## Cancer in experimental animals

In a two-year study in rats with whole-body inhalation, butyraldehyde induced SCC of the nasal cavity in males and females; SCC, carcinosarcoma or adenosquamous cell carcinoma (combined) of the nasal cavity in males; and squamous cell papilloma or SCC (combined) of the nasal cavity, spleen mononuclear cell leukaemia, mammary gland fibroadenoma, and mammary gland adenoma, fibroadenoma or adenocarcinoma (combined) in females (JBRC, 2022a, b).

## Mechanistic evidence

Butyraldehyde induced chromosomal aberrations in Chinese hamster lung cells CHL/IU after short and continuous treatment (Ministry of Health, Labour, and Welfare Japan, no date.). Special meiotic anomalies consisting of degenerative nuclei, multi-spindle cells, and polyploid cells were observed at all stages of spermatogenesis in male mice after treatment with butyraldehyde (Moutschen-Dahmen et al., 1975); this was included in the OECD Existing Chemicals Database as a positive result for genotoxicity (OECD, 2009a). Butyraldehyde did not induce micronuclei in blood cells of male and female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice fed by gavage at doses ranging from 75 to 1200 mg/kg bw once per day for 65 days (Witt et al., 2000) and it did not increase the frequencies of chromosomal aberration, but did induce a statistically significant increase in the frequency of SCE in a dose-dependent manner in CHO cells (Galloway et al., 1987). Butyraldehyde did not influence the frequency of wild-type males in a sex-linked recessive lethal test in *Drosophila melanogaster* (Valencia et al., 1985). Butyraldehyde was not mutagenic at dose ranges between 10 and 1000 mg per plate in *S. typhimurium* strains TA98, TA100, TA102, TA104, TA1535, and TA1537 without or with rat-, hamster-, or mouse-induced liver S9 microsomes (Dillon et al., 1998; OECD, 2009a; NTP, 2023g).

In an analysis of large-scale population data, butyraldehyde exposure was associated with markers of chronic inflammation and oxidative stress (Zang et al., 2023). Genome-wide transcriptome and microRNA sequencing in human A549 alveolar epithelial cells exposed to butyraldehyde showed changes in 25 microRNA expression, and integrated analyses of miRNA and mRNA expression profiles revealed

significant correlations. Analysis of target genes (2166 genes for butyraldehyde) provided evidence that it affected cytokine-induced toxicity signalling. Butyraldehyde increased levels of IL-6 and IL-8 (Song et al., 2015). Butyraldehyde was found to upregulate human immunodeficiency viral long-terminal repeat-, SV40 early gene promoter-, and glucocerebrosidase promoter-directed expression of heterologous genes stably integrated into murine NIH 3T3 fibroblast cells (Carstea et al., 1993).

### Summary

There is minimal evidence of cancer in humans. In a long-term cancer bioassay in rats, butyraldehyde administered by inhalation caused tumours in males and females at various tissue sites. There is some evidence that butyraldehyde exhibits KCs, including genotoxicity, chronic inflammation, and epigenetic alterations involved in the immune response, mainly from experimental systems. On the basis of the evidence of cancers in experimental animals, the Advisory Group considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of butyraldehyde to be warranted, possibly together with other aldehydes included in this report.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 196 Carbon disulfide (CAS No. 75-15-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Carbon disulfide has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of carbon disulfide (WHO, 2002a). Carbon disulfide was given a priority rating of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### Exposure characterization

Carbon disulfide is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Carbon disulfide is used to manufacture rayon and cellophane, in the production of rubber, and as a fumigant for grain, spaces, and materials, (Newhook et al., 2002; ACGIH, 2020; Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2022). It is also used to produce other chemicals, in the manufacture of electronic vacuum tubes, and as a solvent for resins, fats, oils, waxes, and other chemicals.

Exposure to carbon disulfide occurs mainly in the workplace. In the production of viscous rayon, heavy occupational exposures may occur during the opening of spinning machines and while cutting and drying (La Dou and Harrison, 2013). As carbon disulfide is volatile, the general population might be exposed via polluted air (Newhook et al., 2002; Wofford et al., 2014). It is present in cigarette smoke (CDC, 2010). It can also be an impurity in pharmaceutical products. Carbon disulfide or its metabolite 2-thiothiazolidine-4-carboxylic acid have been widely detected in blood and urine of workers (Vermeulen et al., 2005) and the general population (Brugnone et al., 1994; Newhook et al., 2002).

### Cancer in humans

Few studies have assessed the association of carbon disulfide exposure and cancer risk, and there are only sporadic findings. In a cohort of rubber workers at one plant in Ohio, USA, Wilcosky et al. (1984) reported a significantly increased risk of lympho-sarcoma and lymphatic leukaemia associated with carbon disulfide exposure. An increased risk of lymphatic leukaemia associated with carbon disulfide exposure was also reported in a case-control study of rubber workers in the USA and the UK (Checkoway et al., 1984).

In another cohort of chemical production workers, many of whom were exposed to carbon disulfide along with other chemicals and shift work, an excess of NHL was observed, which was however not associated with employment duration (Carreón et al., 2014). Results for cancer risk in workers exposed to carbon disulfide only were not presented. In a cohort of workers with reported carbon disulfide poisoning in Poland between 1970 and 1990, an excess of death from colon cancer compared with the national population

was reported (Peplowska et al., 1996). Other studies of cohorts of chemical production workers have found no association between carbon disulfide exposure and cancer risk (Nurminen and Hernberg, 1984; Peplowska et al., 2001). Co-exposure to other chemicals and healthy-worker biases were common in all cohorts.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

No evidence of carcinogenicity has been reported in long-term studies with laboratory animals. One study reported an increase of pulmonary adenoma in A/J strain mice exposed to carbon disulfide for 6 months (Adkins et al., 1986). A review on toxicity of carbon disulfide reported that there was minimal evidence after administration by gavage to rats and mice due to poor survival of the animals (Beauchamp et al., 1983).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

Carbon disulfide is metabolized by two main routes: by reaction with amino acids or reduced GSH to form thiocarbamates or conjugated GSH, and by CYP-mediated reaction to form reactive sulfur (US EPA, 1986b). DNA damage in human buccal cells of workers occupationally exposed long-term to carbon disulfide was monitored with comet assay, and DNA damage was significantly higher in the exposed group than in control group (Chen and Tan, 2004; Pappuswamy et al., 2023). Carton et al. (2007) identified *TP53* CGT > CTT transversions in buccal cell DNA of production workers ( $n = 76$ ) at a viscose factory exposed to carbon disulfide (among other pollutants) and in the DNA of non-exposed office workers ( $n = 67$ ). The mutation appeared more frequently in the exposed than in the non-exposed workers who were smokers. In human sperm exposed to carbon disulfide in vitro, there was a significant increase in the frequency of chromosomal aberrations and in the frequency of chromosomal breaks. However, carbon disulfide was not mutagenic to *S. typhimurium* strains TA98 and TA100 at 300–1000  $\mu\text{mol}$  nor to *E. coli* strain WP2 *uvrA* at 20–600  $\mu\text{mol}$  with or without metabolic activation, nor in *D. melanogaster* at 200–800 ppm. DNA damage in mouse sperm was detected by single-cell gel electrophoresis assay.

It has been reported that carbon disulfide exposure in urban areas is associated with oxidative stress markers and risk of diabetes (Xu et al., 2021c). Increased risk of infections has been observed in farmers using carbon disulfide (Parks et al., 2021). There are several reports of decreased libido and/or impotence among males occupationally exposed to high concentrations of carbon disulfide. Reproductive health hazards for women chronically exposed to carbon disulfide in the workplace include menstrual disorders, earlier average age at menopause, and complex disturbances in the neurohormonal system including diminished secretion of estrogens and progesterone in ovaries and dehydroepiandrosterone sulfate in the adrenal gland (Cirla et al., 1978; Franco et al., 1982; LaDou and Harrison, 2013). Renal injury and hyperplasia in renal biopsy following long-term exposure to carbon disulfide have been reported (Ou et al., 2017; Yan et al., 2019). Carbon disulfide also affects liver enzymes, particularly those related to lipid metabolism. The increases in serum cholesterol that are sometimes seen following carbon disulfide exposure may be a result of increased hepatic cholesterol synthesis (Kotseva, 2001; Navaneethan et al., 2014, 2015).

### **Summary**

There is sparse evidence for carcinogenicity in both humans and experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that carbon disulfide exhibits KCs in experimental systems and in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of carbon disulfide to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)



## 197 Catechol (CAS No. 120-80-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Catechol (1,2-dihydroxybenzene) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 71 in 1999 (IARC, 1999d), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence of carcinogenicity in animals. Catechol was given a priority rating for re-evaluation of *low* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a)

### Exposure characterization

Catechol is used in the production of pesticides, perfumes, flavours, and pharmaceuticals and has various specialty uses in certain hair dyes. It occurs naturally in certain foods and is present in tobacco smoke.

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

There is already *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### Mechanistic evidence

Most of the mechanistic evidence identified in the literature search was related to catechol-*O*-methyltransferase. The few mechanistic studies on pure catechol indicated protective effects.

### Summary

There is little new evidence to suggest a change in classification is likely for catechol. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of catechol is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 198 Cumyl hydroperoxide (CAS No. 80-15-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Cumyl hydroperoxide has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Cumyl hydroperoxide (also known as cumene hydroperoxide) is an organic hydroperoxide used primarily in industrial settings as a polymerization initiator in the production of certain plastics and rubbers and in producing phenol and acetone by catalytic cleavage (Wang et al., 2001; Gooch, 2011; Rider et al., 2016). It is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Human exposures to cumyl hydroperoxide are primarily occupational through skin contact and inhalation during manufacturing processes (Rider et al., 2016). Persons involved in industrial manufacturing of polymers, plastics, and rubbers or in the handling, transportation, or storage of cumyl hydroperoxide in industrial settings may be exposed (Gooch, 2011; Rider et al., 2016). Pollution of water systems with cumyl hydroperoxide is a potential route of exposure to the general public (Gooch, 2011; Rider et al., 2016).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

The evidence for carcinogenicity of cumyl hydroperoxide in experimental animals was reviewed by NIES, (1998). Kotin and Falk (1963) reported a single subcutaneous sarcoma, and 11 malignant lymphomas in a group of 50 C57B1 mice treated with 50  $\mu$ M cumyl hydroperoxide by subcutaneous injection, with a 14-month time to appearance of first tumour. However, concurrent controls were not included in this study. In a lifetime carcinogenicity study with dermal application of cumyl hydroperoxide in Swiss Millerton mice, no increase in tumour incidence was reported (Van Duuren et al., 1965). However, a subcutaneous injection of cumyl hydroperoxide once per week for 76 weeks in the left axillary area of mice induced one fibrosarcoma, while no tumours were present at the injection site among control mice (Van Duuren et al., 1966). Similar treatment of rats induced no tumours (Van Duuren et al., 1967). Cumene hydroperoxide is believed to be an active promoter in the initiation–promotion model of the mouse epidermis due to its ability to generate free radicals (Trush and Kensler, 1991).

Cumyl hydroperoxide induced the formation of skin papillomas and carcinomas in AP-1-luciferase reporter transgenic mice primed with dimethylbenz[*a*]anthracene (DMBA-Cum-OOH) exposed for 29 weeks (Murray et al., 2007b).

In a DMBA-initiated SENCAR mouse strain treated for 20 weeks, cumyl hydroperoxide induced the formation of skin papillomas and carcinomas (Shvedova et al., 2004).

### Mechanistic evidence

There is evidence that cumyl peroxide is genotoxic (NIES, 1998). In L5178Y tk<sup>+/−</sup> mouse lymphoma cells, cumyl hydroperoxide induced DNA damage as measured by the comet assay, and micronuclei; it also induced gene mutations at the Tk locus in these cells (Brink et al. 2009). In contrast to these positive results, cumyl hydroperoxide did not induce DNA adducts (i.e. 8-oxo-7,8-dihydro-2-deoxyguanosine or 1,N<sup>6</sup>-etheno-2-deoxyadenosine) in L5178Y tk<sup>+/−</sup> cells (Brink et al., 2009). Cumyl hydroperoxide is a known oxidant. It induced cellular ROS in human 3D-gingival tissue equivalents. The generation of ROS was observed in the nuclei of keratinocytes, as detected by two species of ROS-staining dyes such as CellROXGreen Reagent and dihydroethidium (Xiao and Miwa, 2017). Accumulation of thiobarbituric acid-reactive substances, inflammation, and decreased levels of GSH and total antioxidant reserves were also observed in the skin of DMBA–Cum-OOH-exposed mice (Murray et al., 2007b). Cumyl hydroperoxide induces higher levels of oxidative stress and inflammation (as indicated by the accumulation of peroxidative products, antioxidant depletion, and oedema formation) in the skin of a DMBA-initiated SENCAR mouse strain (Shvedova et al., 2004).

Cumyl hydroperoxide induced cell death in C6 glioma cells, preceded by lipid peroxidation measured by TBARS, malondialdehyde, and hexanal (Linden et al., 2008). Swiss albino female mice given topical applications of cumyl hydroperoxide showed increased cutaneous microsomal lipid peroxidation and induction of xanthine oxidase activity, accompanied by decreased activities of cutaneous antioxidant enzymes and depletion in the level of GSH. Parallel to these changes, a sharp decrease in the activities of phase II metabolizing enzymes was observed. Cumyl hydroperoxide treatment also induced ornithine decarboxylase activity and enhanced the [<sup>3</sup>H]thymidine uptake in DNA synthesis in murine skin (Sultana et al., 2003).

Lymphocytes from healthy donors were exposed to cumyl hydroperoxide (at concentrations of 5–40 mM) and malondialdehyde, and cellular viability and growth, ROS, and protein oxidation were measured. Time-dependent increases were observed in the production of all these markers after incubation for 12–48 hours. Cumyl hydroperoxide (25 mM) initiated substantial micronucleus formation assayed 48 hours after incubation compared with DMSO controls (Onaran et al., 2001).

## Summary

Human exposure to cumyl hydroperoxide is primarily occupational in industrial settings, and occasionally contamination of water systems may lead to exposure in the general population. No studies of cancer in humans were available, and the evidence of cancer in experimental animals is restricted to promotion studies. There is mechanistic evidence in human primary cells and experimental systems suggesting that cumyl hydroperoxide exhibits KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of cumyl hydroperoxide to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 199 Ethylene oxide (CAS No. 75-21-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Ethylene oxide (EtO) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in Volume 100F in 2009 (IARC, 2012b). The basis of the classification was a finding of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals, *limited* evidence for cancer in humans (specifically for breast cancer and lymphatic neoplasms including NHL, multiple myeloma, and CLL), and *strong* evidence of electrophilicity, genotoxicity, mutagenicity, and clastogenicity in exposed humans and across experimental systems, including in rodents.

### Exposure characterization

EtO is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). A major use of EtO is as a sterilant gas in industrial and hospital settings (IARC, 2012b). EtO gas is also used in some countries, such as Canada, the USA and India, as a fungicide, bactericide, and insecticide in foods (Dudkiewicz et al., 2022). According to the EU CARcinogen EXposure (CAREX) database, most workers exposed to EtO worked in medical, other health, and veterinary services. In the NIOSH National Occupational Exposure System database, during 1981–1983, women comprised 44% of the workforce exposed to EtO. Heavy use of EtO has continued globally, and concerns have increased about environmental exposures, especially near facilities that manufacture or use EtO. EtO is also present in tobacco smoke (Yuan et al., 2012) and has been used as a pesticide (Ambroise et al., 2005). The US EPA (2024f) has recently proposed new EtO emission standards and mitigation measures.

### Cancer in humans

Since the previous evaluation, new studies have examined the risk of breast cancer and lymphatic and haematopoietic neoplasms in relation to occupational or environmental exposure to EtO (Mikoczy et al., 2011; Park, 2020; Jones et al., 2023b). A relatively small study of cancer in sterilant workers exposed to EtO in Sweden found increased risk of breast cancer incidence in women in the two highest exposure quartiles compared with those exposed at less than the median, as well as evidence of a strong healthy-worker bias (Mikoczy et al., 2011). No clear exposure–response relation was observed for all haematolymphoid cancers combined. In a study of environmental exposure, researchers linked the US EPA Toxics Release Inventory to residences of participants in the NIH-AARP Diet and Health Study to develop quantitative metrics of exposure (emissions weighted for distance and/or wind direction) from EtO-emitting facilities (Jones et al., 2023b). Positive associations were seen for some of these metrics and breast cancer (particularly in situ), with risk declining as distance from the facility increased, but no clear increase in NHL risk was observed.

A large cohort study (pooled across many workplaces) of workers using EtO to sterilize medical supplies or spices was informative in the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation (Steenland et al., 2003, 2004). A reanalysis of this cohort found evidence of a strong HWSB (Park, 2020). Partial adjustment for this bias by

adjusting for employment duration led to stronger associations between cumulative EtO exposure and cancers of lung, female breast, and haematopoietic cancer. In the next few years, NIOSH aims to publish updated follow-up of this cohort, including information on breast cancer mortality and incidence. Use of the new Virtual Pooled Registry Cancer Linkage System (NCI, 2022) should overcome the main limitation of cancer underascertainment in the previous cancer incidence analysis by Steenland et al. (2003).

An industry-funded meta-analysis estimated an overall meta-relative risk of 1.48 (95% CI, 1.07–2.05) for haematolymphoid cancers and 0.97 (95% CI, 0.80–1.18) for breast cancer, with higher risk seen for the former in earlier studies (Marsh et al., 2019).

### Summary

There is growing evidence of an association between EtO exposure and risk of breast cancer, with mixed evidence for lymphatic and haematopoietic cancers. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of ethylene oxide to be warranted but recommended delaying the evaluation pending completion of the highly informative NIOSH study update for cancer mortality and incidence.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 200 Fluoranthene (CAS No. 206-44-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Fluoranthene has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Volume 92 in 2005 (IARC, 2010b).

### Exposure characterization

Fluoranthene is present in mixtures PAHs as part of the incomplete combustion of organic matter. It is also a component of coal tars and petroleum-based asphalts and is present in coke-oven emissions. Minor uses include as a component in plastic composite manufacturing and electrical insulation oils, as a precursor in drug and dye manufacturing, as a stabilizer in epoxy resins, waste tyre retreading processing, and in emission of 3D printers (US EPA, 2012b; Steinle, 2016; Fu et al., 2018; PubChem, 2024i). Sources of exposure include food and breast milk, urban air and water pollution, gasoline and diesel exhaust, and tobacco smoke (IARC, 1983, 2010b; US EPA, 2012b; Acharya et al., 2019).

### Cancer in humans

The previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation of fluoranthene (IARC, 2010b) did not identify any human cancer studies specifically examining fluoranthene, and no such subsequent studies were identified by the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 2010b), there was *limited* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of fluoranthene. Four studies demonstrated carcinogenicity of fluoranthene in newborn mice. In newborn male and female Swiss-Webster BLU:ha (ICR) mice, three intraperitoneal injections of fluoranthene during two postnatal weeks increased the incidence of lung tumours (primarily adenomas) in both males and females (Busby et al., 1984, 1989). Incidence of lung tumours (primarily adenomas) was increased in both sexes of CD-1 mice after three intraperitoneal injections of fluoranthene during two postnatal weeks (Wang and Busby, 1993; LaVoie et al., 1994). In male mice a low incidence of liver tumours was noted at 6 months, but much higher incidence at 9 months (Wang and Busby, 1993). Fluoranthene was inactive as an initiator in the mouse skin initiation–promotion assay. However, when co-administered with BaP, fluoranthene significantly increased the incidence of tumours in mice, produced an excess number of

skin tumours (primarily squamous cell carcinomas), and shortened their time to occurrence compared with those induced by the same dose of BaP alone (Van Duuren and Goldschmidt, 1976).

### Mechanistic evidence

Fluoranthene exhibited mutagenic activity in *S. typhimurium*: in the strain TM677 with S9 liver fraction from rat pretreated with Arochlor 1254 (Kaden et al., 1979); in the strain TA98 with S9 fraction of rat pretreated with phenobarbital and 5,6-benzoflavone (Nagai et al., 2002); in the strain TA100 in the presence of rat liver homogenate (LaVoie et al., 1982); and in the strains TA98 and NA100 in the presence of rat liver S9 fraction (Mossanda et al., 1979). However, fluoranthene did not show mutagenic activity in other studies using *S. typhimurium* with or without rat S9 activation, with strains TA1537 and TA1538 (Gatehouse, 1980) and strains TA98, TA100, TA1535, and TA1537 (Florin et al., 1980). Fluoranthene did not significantly influence the frequency of micronucleated mouse erythrocytes induced by other PAHs in FVB and BALB/c mice (Abramsson-Zetterberg and Maurer, 2015). Chronic administration of fluoranthene in the diet resulted in DNA adduct formation in most examined tissues, including liver, kidney, lung, small intestine, heart, spleen, and lymphocytes (Gorelick et al., 1989; Gorelick and Wogan, 1989; Wang et al., 1995). Fluoranthene influenced the cell cycle in human colon adenocarcinoma cells HT29 in vitro, increasing the proportions of cells in S- and G2-phases (Harris et al., 2013). It inhibited gap junctional intercellular communication (GJIC) and activated MAPKs in human HBE1 bronchial epithelial cell line (Brózman et al., 2020). Exposure of human A549 lung cells to fluoranthene caused significant induction of CYP1B1 and addition of a binary mixture (fluoranthene and 1-methylanthracene) to BaP-treated human EAS-2B lung cells resulted in significant increases in micronucleus formation, dysregulation of GJIC, and changes in the cell cycle (Bauer et al., 2022). Chemical structure analysis led to proposals on how certain features of fluoranthene enable its interaction with gap junctions (Weis et al., 1998).

In a subchronic toxicity study in F344 rats, fluoranthene induced renal and haematological changes including a decrease in leukocytes of up to 40% (Knuckles et al., 2004). In CD-1 mice, subchronic exposure to fluoranthene caused nephropathy and haematological alterations and increased levels of liver enzymes (US EPA, 2012b). In rat H4IIE hepatoma cells, fluoranthene inhibited CYP1A1 activity (Willett et al., 1998). In rat WB-F344 liver epithelial cells, fluoranthene caused aryl hydrocarbon receptor-mediated connexin-43 downregulation and inhibited GJIC (Upham et al., 1994; Bláha et al., 2002; Nováková et al., 2012; Andrysík et al., 2013; Babica et al., 2016). It also induced expression of most AhR gene targets, such as CYP1A1, AHRR, or TIPARP (Kabátková et al., 2015). In the C10 mouse cell line (model systems of alveolar type II cells), fluoranthene inhibited gap junctions and cell communications and activated pro-inflammatory and MAPK pathways (Osgood et al., 2017).

### Summary

Fluoranthene is present in PAH mixtures as part of the incomplete combustion of organic matter and is commonly found in pollution and in some occupational environments. No studies of cancer in humans were identified. Fluoranthene was shown in four studies on newborn mice of both sexes to possess carcinogenic activity and demonstrated promoter activity in one study in mice. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that fluoranthene exhibits KCs in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of fluoranthene to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 201 Formaldehyde (CAS No. 50-00-0)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Formaldehyde has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *carcinogenic to humans* (Group 1) in Volume 100F in 2009 (IARC, 2012b), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in humans (for nasopharyngeal cancer and leukaemia). There is also *limited* evidence for sinonasal cancer in humans. The IPCS has published an evaluation of health effects of formaldehyde (WHO, 2002b).

### Exposure characterization

Formaldehyde is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD (OECD, 2007) and the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). Formaldehyde is used in the production of a variety of polymers and other chemicals, including ethylene glycol, pentaerythritol, and hexamethylene tetramine. Formaldehyde-containing resins, in turn, form raw materials for fertilizer, plywood, insulation, casting cores, and other uses. Occupational exposure may occur in various industries, as formaldehyde is used in the manufacture of furniture adhesives, photographic films, leather, dyes, cosmetics, explosives, pesticides, disinfectants, and preservatives. It remains commonly used as an embalming fluid, for fixation of tissue samples, and as a hair straightener (see agent 158), resulting in short-term higher exposure of workers. Formaldehyde is also present in automobile exhaust, wood smoke, tobacco smoke, and air pollution, resulting in exposure of the general population (IARC, 2012b).

### Cancer in humans

There have been relatively few studies of formaldehyde exposure in relation to cancer sites other than leukaemia and nasopharynx since the previous evaluation in 2009. For sinonasal cancer, a meta-analysis observed an increased risk for ever-exposure to formaldehyde (meta-RR, 1.68; 95% CI, 1.37–2.06 for four case-control studies and 1.09; 95% CI, 0.66–1.79 for three cohort studies), with some evidence of an exposure-response relation (Binazzi et al., 2015). All but one of the case-control studies (Mayr et al., 2010) were published before the previous evaluation. In the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation, it was noted that results for brain tumours were inconsistent. Since then, a meta-analysis has evaluated occupational studies of brain tumours (Rana et al., 2021), including five studies of professional workers and seven studies of industrial workers. In total, there were ten cohort studies and two case-control studies. Using highest peak exposure category as the preferred metric, a meta-RR of 1.71 (95% CI, 1.07–2.73) was observed. Use of alternative exposure metrics (highest average intensity, highest cumulative exposure, and longest duration categories) changed the meta-RR only slightly (meta-RR, 1.77; 95% CI, 1.11–2.83 for average; meta-RR, 1.72; 95% CI, 1.09–2.70 for cumulative; meta-RR, 1.75; 95% CI, 1.07–2.84 for duration). Using the “ever exposure” category, the meta-RR was 1.82 (95% CI, 1.20–2.75). These patterns were robust across sensitivity analyses. Higher meta-RR estimates were seen among the professional workers (meta-RR, 2.42; 95% CI, 1.41–4.17) than among industrial workers (meta-RR, 1.32; 95% CI, 0.72–2.44). These patterns were thought to be consistent with higher exposure levels observed among embalmers and pathologists, compared with garment workers. The authors did not conduct analyses stratified by brain tumour type, and most available studies could not clearly distinguish histopathological subtypes. In the large INTEROCC case-control study (not included in the meta-analysis), an elevated risk of meningioma was observed among the highest cumulative formaldehyde exposure category for women, but not men (McElvenny et al., 2018).

A meta-analysis for cancer of the larynx found meta-RRs of 1.12 (95% CI, 0.97–1.29) for low and 1.13 (95% CI, 0.98–1.31) for high exposure to formaldehyde, combining results from 11 studies (Paget-Bailly et al., 2012).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

The potential for induction of sinonasal cancer after exposure to formaldehyde via the inhalation exposure route seems plausible. Formaldehyde can cause neural damage to the olfactory bulb, but whether and how inhalation or dermal exposure relates to brain tissue exposure remains unknown. The meta-analysis of Rana et al. (2021) explored candidate genes that may be associated with brain tumour development due to formaldehyde exposure. Enriched genes for brain tumours included those related to oxidative stress and pro-inflammatory markers.

### **Summary**

With additional cohort follow-up and publication of new case-control studies since the previous evaluation of formaldehyde, there appears to be evidence that could support a determination of cancer at additional sites. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of formaldehyde to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## **202 Furan (CAS No. 110-00-9)**

### **Current IARC/WHO classification**

Furan has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 63 in 1995 (IARC, 1995), on the basis of *inadequate* evidence regarding cancer in humans and *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals. Furan was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a).

### **Exposure characterization**

Furan is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “furan is used as a synthetic intermediate in the preparation of tetrahydrofuran, pyrrole, and thiophene. It is also used in the production of pesticides, stabilizers, and pharmaceuticals. The major sources of exposure to furan for the general public are tobacco products and food. Mainstream cigarette smoke is estimated to contain up to 65 µg of furan per cigarette. Furan is produced during the cooking of many common foods, including coffee, baked or fried cereal products, canned and jarred foods, baby food, and infant formula. Coffee contributes approximately 50% of the total population-based furan exposure in the USA in individuals aged 2 years and older.”

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1995), there was *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, there is ample evidence that furan is electrophilic and genotoxic, and that it causes epigenetic changes. However, these data derive primarily from experimental systems, with very little evidence from exposed humans or human primary cells.

## Summary

The Advisory Group considered that mechanistic studies relevant to the KCs for furan in human systems are still sparse and would be unlikely to lead to a change in classification for furan from Group 2B. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of furan is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 203 Glutathione (CAS No. 70-18-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Glutathione has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Glutathione is a tripeptide composed of three amino acids: cysteine, glutamic acid, and glycine (Pizzorno, 2014). It occurs naturally in human cells and functions as an antioxidant to mop up ROS or free radicals (Bansal and Simon, 2018). Glutathione occurs in cells in two states; reduced GSH and also as oxidized glutathione (glutathione disulfide or GSSG), that is formed on interaction with ROS. The GSH/GSSG ratio is a measure of the cell's redox status and oxidative stress (Pizzorno, 2014). Ways of increasing intracellular endogenous glutathione include a balanced diet, reducing alcohol intake and reducing exposure to persistent organic pollutants (Pizzorno, 2014). Exogenous glutathione supplements may be administered orally, intravenously, or by inhalation (Pizzorno, 2014).

### Cancer in humans

No studies were identified that examined external exposure to glutathione and cancer in humans. Several reviews highlight the dual role of glutathione in cancer, but it is not clear from these studies that glutathione was from exogenous sources. The null genotype of glutathione *S*-transferase T1 (GSTT1) has been associated with gastric cancer (e.g. Lai et al., 2005; Zhang et al., 2013c; Zeng et al., 2016) and glutathione *S*-transferase M1 (GSTM1) polymorphism has been associated with oesophageal cancer in Asian populations (Lu et al., 2016).

### Cancer in experimental animals

No studies of cancer in experimental animals were available to the Advisory Group.

### Mechanistic evidence

No studies are available on the potential of glutathione to exhibit the KCs. Altered cellular glutathione homeostasis has been shown to increase cell proliferation and prevent cell death (Hatem et al., 2017; Bansal and Simon, 2018). Differences in expression and/or function of glutathione-dependent enzymes, e.g. due to genetic polymorphism, have been associated with increased tumour growth and/or incidence in mice and humans, while enzyme inhibition has been shown to exacerbate the toxicity of carcinogenic agents (Kennedy et al., 2020). Glutathione was inactive in over 200 ToxCast assays.

## Summary

No studies of exogenous glutathione exposure in relation to cancer in humans or experimental animals were identified. Sparse mechanistic information is available indicating that factors altering endogenous glutathione levels or glutathione-dependent enzyme activity influence carcinogenic processes or outcomes in humans, animals, and in vitro human systems. Considering that either an excess of glutathione or a deficiency of glutathione could protect against or induce carcinogenesis, and considering also that alterations



of glutathione homeostasis or cancer susceptibility due to genetic polymorphisms may not be a suitable topic for the *IARC Monographs* programme, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of glutathione is unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 204 Glycidamide (CAS No. 5694-00-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Glycidamide has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Glycidamide was given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of cancer bioassay and mechanistic evidence.

### Exposure characterization

Glycidamide is a major metabolite of acrylamide (agent 192). Therefore, the major source of human exposure to glycidamide is through exposure to acrylamide in occupational situations (especially in acrylamide monomer production; Moorman et al., 2012), through the diet (Delatour and Stadler, 2023), or use of tobacco products. Glycidamide has also been reported to be present in certain processed foods at a level of 0.3–1.5 µg/kg, or less than 1% of that of acrylamide (Granvogl et al., 2008; NTP, 2014).

### Cancer in humans

There are no data pertaining to the carcinogenicity of glycidamide, independently from acrylamide, in humans (NTP, 2014), although glycidamide biomarker levels were associated with increased cancer mortality risk (Gu et al., 2022).

### Cancer in experimental animals

The carcinogenicity of glycidamide has been demonstrated in experimental animals. C57BL/6J *Min*<sup>+</sup> mice, a strain susceptible to intestinal neoplasia, and their wild-type littermates were administered subcutaneous injections of glycidamide at 1 week and 2 weeks after birth. In both strains, there was a dose-related induction of tumours of the small intestine, and the increase was significant at the highest dose (Olstørn et al., 2007). In another study, male B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice injected intraperitoneally with glycidamide on postnatal days 1, 8, and 15 had a significant increase in hepatocellular tumours (Von Tungeln et al., 2012). Male and female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice exposed to glycidamide in the drinking-water had significant dose-related increases in tumours of the Harderian gland, lung, forestomach, and skin. Female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice also had significantly increased incidence of tumours of the mammary gland and ovary. In male and female F344/N rats, there were significant increases in neoplasms of the thyroid and the oral cavity and mononuclear cell leukaemia. Male F344/N rats also had significant dose-related increases in tumours of the epididymis or testis and heart, and female F344/N rats had significant increases in tumours of the mammary gland, clitoral gland, and forestomach (NTP, 2014; Beland et al., 2015).

### Mechanistic evidence

There is evidence that glycidamide is electrophilic. DNA adducts from its reactions with deoxyguanosine and deoxyadenosine have been detected in mice and rats treated with glycidamide. The same DNA adducts have been detected in Chinese hamster V79 lung cells, mouse L5178Y *kk*<sup>+/-</sup> lymphoma cells, and primary mouse embryonic fibroblasts treated in vitro with glycidamide. Glycidamide reacts with cysteine residues in haemoglobin and other proteins and with the N-terminal valine of haemoglobin (NTP, 2014).

There is evidence that glycidamide is genotoxic. Glycidamide induced mutations in *S. typhimurium* (various strains), mouse L5178Y tk<sup>+/−</sup> lymphoma cells (attributed to a clastogenic mode of action), Chinese hamster V79 lung cells (chromosomal aberrations), CHO cells, Big Blue mouse embryo fibroblasts (primarily substitutions), and human TK6 lymphoid cells (primarily point mutations). Strand breaks were detected in human peripheral blood lymphocytes incubated with glycidamide. Increased mutant frequencies have been detected in male and female mice and rats treated with glycidamide (NTP, 2014).

As reported for acrylamide (see agent 192), in the previous *IARC Monographs* evaluation (IARC, 1994c), there was *strong* evidence that acrylamide and its active metabolite glycidamide form covalent adducts with DNA and are genotoxic in experimental animals. Since then, several new studies have reported positive results on the clastogenic and mutagenic properties of acrylamide and glycidamide (Benford et al., 2022). In addition, further information on the mechanisms underlying the mutagenic effects of acrylamide and glycidamide in exposed humans is available.

Metabolic conversion of acrylamide leads to glycidamide, which forms an *N*7-glycidamide–guanine DNA adduct in rodents. *N*7-Glycidamide–guanine adducts in the blood DNA of healthy volunteers have been identified and quantified (Hemgesberg et al., 2021; Jones et al., 2022b). A unique mutational signature imprinted by acrylamide through the effects of its reactive metabolite glycidamide has been identified. This mutational signature was found in one-third of approximately 1600 tumour genomes corresponding to 19 human tumour types from 14 organs (Zhivagui et al., 2019). In addition, Hogervorst et al. (2017) investigated whether genetic make-up modifies the association between acrylamide and ovarian cancer risk, thereby contributing to evidence on acrylamide's mechanism of action and the causality of the observed association in humans. The authors observed statistically significant interactions between several SNPs in the HSD3B1/B2 gene cluster and acrylamide intake for ovarian cancer risk, suggesting that acrylamide may cause ovarian cancer through effects on sex hormones (Hogervorst et al., 2017). There is evidence that acrylamide induces oxidative stress in experimental systems (Zhang et al., 2023g) and exposed humans (Piwowar et al., 2023).

## Summary

No studies of exogenous exposure to glycidamide and cancer in humans were available. There is evidence that glycidamide, when administered orally in drinking-water, causes tumours in two rodent species, at several different tissue sites. There is substantial evidence that glycidamide exhibits KCs in experimental animals and some evidence in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of glycidamide to be warranted, and that glycidamide should be evaluated together with acrylamide (agent 192).

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 205 Ingested nitrate (CAS No. 14 797-55-8)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Nitrate or nitrite (ingested) under conditions that result in endogenous nitrosation has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *probably carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2A) in Volume 94 in 2006 (IARC, 2010c), with *limited* evidence in humans for stomach cancer. IARC (2010c) noted that: (1) the endogenous nitrogen cycle in humans includes interconversion of nitrate and nitrite; (2) nitrite-derived nitrosating agents produced in the acid stomach environment can react with nitrosating compounds such as secondary amines and amides to generate *N*-nitroso compounds; (3) nitrosating conditions are enhanced upon ingestion of additional nitrate, nitrite, or nitrosatable compounds; and (4) some *N*-nitroso

compounds are known carcinogens. The WHO has published a drinking-water quality guideline for nitrate (see WHO, 2016).

### **Exposure characterization**

Nitrate is a naturally occurring ion that is ubiquitous in the environment. It is a product of the oxidation of nitrogen, as part of the cycle required by all living systems to produce complex organic molecules, such as enzymes and other proteins. Human exposure to nitrate is through ingested food and water.

#### **Ingested nitrate from food**

The main sources of ingested nitrate from food are vegetables, especially leafy vegetables (> 1000 mg/kg), bakery goods and cereal products (mean, about 10 mg/kg, up to about 20 mg/kg) and cured meat (mean, 60 mg/kg; up to 450 mg/kg). For an average adult living in an area with low drinking-water contamination, total exposure to ingested nitrate is estimated to be about 60–90 mg per person per day. For high consumers of vegetables, the intake of nitrate may reach 200 mg per person per day. An ADI of 3.7 mg nitrate ion/kg bw per day was adopted by the European Commission. It was estimated that the exposure resulting from its use as a food additive (sodium nitrate, E 251 and potassium nitrate, E 252) did not exceed this ADI. If all sources of dietary nitrate exposure were considered together, the ADI would be exceeded for all age groups at the mean and the highest exposure. The contribution of nitrates used as food additives represented approximately 2% of the overall exposure of nitrates as food additives (European Commission, 2023).

#### **Ingested nitrate from drinking-water**

When the concentration of nitrate in drinking-water is greater than 10 mg/L, water becomes an important source of exposure and then is generally the principal source of ingested nitrate (IARC, 2010c). In most countries, nitrate concentrations in drinking-water derived from surface water do not exceed 10 mg/L. In 15 European countries, the percentage of the population exposed to nitrate concentrations in drinking-water above 50 mg/L (as nitrate ion) ranged from 0.5% to 10% (WHO, 2016). Nitrate levels in water resources have increased worldwide as a result of applications of inorganic fertilizer and animal manure in agricultural areas. Nitrogen fertilizers, as the major source of nitrate in the soil, can contaminate groundwater, surface water and drinking-water. Contamination sources also include septic systems that do not effectively remove nitrogen, and discharges from wastewater treatment plants, as well as atmospheric deposition of nitrogen oxides and fertilizer use on lawns, golf courses, and parks. In areas with nitrate-contaminated drinking-water, this source may account for most human nitrate exposure. In the USA, the highest reported nitrate concentration was in a domestic well (> 1200 mg/L as nitrate-nitrogen) (WHO, 2016). WHO guidelines on safe concentrations of nitrate compounds in water for human use are regularly exceeded in many countries, especially in shallow waters and wells, in both high-income and low- and middle-income countries (WHO, 2016; Picetti et al., 2022; Clemmensen et al., 2023; Levin et al., 2023). The German Federal Institute of Risk Assessment (2009) estimated that in Germany the median nitrate intake for adults from water and other beverages was 28.3 mg per day – about [18%] of the median nitrate intake from all sources (159.8 mg per day).

### **Cancer in humans**

In a recent review, an association of nitrate in drinking-water with gastric cancer – but with no other cancer site – was identified. The meta-analysis included four case–control studies with a total population of 19 874. Two case–control and two cohort studies not included in the meta-analysis found no evidence of an association (Picetti et al., 2022).

The most consistent associations with drinking-water nitrate ingestion were shown for colon cancer (Espejo-Herrera et al., 2016; Ward et al., 2018). A meta-analysis of 48 publications with 13 different cancer

sites showed an association with colon cancer (Essien et al., 2022). A meta-analysis of six recent case–control and cohort studies showed high exposure levels to be associated with increased risk for colon cancer and colorectal cancer, but not for rectal cancer alone (Chambers et al., 2022). Another meta-analysis suggested that the association with nitrate concentration was stronger for colon cancer than for rectal cancer (Elwood and Werf, 2022). A meta-analysis of three cohort studies and seven case–control studies found no significant association; however, a separate meta-analysis of two case–control studies that reported results on well water observed a significant association only between nitrate and colorectal cancer (Picetti et al., 2022). A nationwide population-based cohort study in Denmark found an increased colorectal cancer risk at drinking-water nitrate concentrations well below the European drinking-water standard of 50 mg/L (Schullehner et al., 2018).

In a US cohort of postmenopausal women (the Iowa Women’s Health Study), high nitrate levels in drinking-water were associated with bladder cancer (Jones et al., 2016), thyroid cancer (Ward et al., 2010b), ovarian cancer (Inoue-Choi et al., 2015), and kidney cancer (Jones et al., 2017b), while no association was found with breast cancer (Inoue-Choi et al., 2012), colon and rectal cancers (Jones et al., 2019), pancreatic cancer (Quist et al., 2018), digestive system cancers (Buller et al., 2021), or endometrial cancer (Medgyesi et al., 2022). In European studies, where nitrate ingestion levels were lower, weaker associations were found for these cancer sites and some positive findings for colon cancer in some of the cohorts (Ward et al., 2018). However, a recent study observed a positive association between preconception/prenatal average nitrate ingestion with childhood cancer in Denmark (Stayner et al., 2021).

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the last evaluation in the *IARC Monographs* (IARC, 2010c), there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of nitrate; there was *limited* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of nitrite; and there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of nitrite in combination with amines or amides.

### **Mechanistic evidence**

There is some evidence of genotoxicity in exposed humans associated with ingested nitrate through drinking-water, although the results are equivocal. Increased micronucleus formation was observed in lymphocytes of women living in Mexico with chronic exposure to nitrate in drinking-water (Gandarilla-Esparza, et al., 2021) and in humans exposed to chronic long-term nitrate therapy by oral or transdermal administration (Andreassi et al., 2001). A significant increase in the mean number of chromosome breaks was observed in children exposed to high nitrate concentrations, but there was no significant increase in the mean number of SCEs per cell (Tsezou et al., 1996). There was no mutagenicity in nitrate-contaminated water from a region in China (Cao et al., 2016). Nitrate contamination in drinking-water was not associated with increased frequencies of SCE in peripheral lymphocyte (Kleinjans et al., 1991).

Several studies of exposed humans observed association of nitrate in drinking-water with thyroid disease. A study of women in the Netherlands consuming water with high nitrate levels found increased prevalence of thyroid hypertrophy (van Maanen et al., 1994). In women, high nitrate exposure was significantly associated with subclinical hypothyroidism (Aschebrook-Kilfoy et al., 2012). A study of school-age children in Slovakia found increased prevalence of subclinical hypothyroidism among children in an area with high nitrate levels in water supplies. In Bulgarian villages with high nitrate levels, clinical examinations of the thyroids of pregnant women and schoolchildren revealed approximately four- and threefold increased prevalences of goitre, respectively (Tajtáková et al., 2006; Rádková et al., 2008).

## Summary

There is new evidence regarding the association between nitrate in drinking-water and cancer in humans, particularly for colon cancer. The Advisory Group was aware of other potentially informative studies of cancer in humans that should be published in the next few years. There is some evidence that nitrate in drinking-water exhibits KCs in exposed humans and experimental animals. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of ingested nitrate to be warranted, towards the latter half of the next 5 years.

**Recommendation:** Medium priority

## 206 Nitrilotriacetic acid (CAS No. 139-13-9)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Nitrilotriacetic acid and its salts (evaluated as a group) have previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Volume 73 in 1998 (IARC, 1999b), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for carcinogenicity in experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

Nitrilotriacetic acid (NTA) is a tertiary amino-polycarboxylic acid with the chemical formula  $C_6H_9NO_6$  and exists as a white crystalline powder at room temperature. It is used as a metal chelating agent in laundry and dishwashing detergents and related cleaning products (IARC, 1999b). It is also widely used in industry as a boiler feedwater additive and in water treatment, textile treatment and metal plating and in pulp and paper processing (Khan and Sultana, 2004; NTP, 2011).

Workers in industries involved in the production or utilization of NTA, such as detergent manufacturing, may have occupational exposure to NTA (NTP, 2011). The environmental presence of NTA is primarily attributed to industrial wastewater and agricultural areas where NTA-containing products are used as a chelating agent to improve the quality of soil (Pinto et al., 2014; Mehrab et al., 2023). Individuals are mainly exposed to NTA through household cleaning products, detergents, or personal care items that contain NTA (Bucheli-Witschel and Egli, 2001). Exposure can occur by oral exposure from consuming water or residues on dishes washed with detergents containing NTA, skin contact during bathing or wearing clothes laundered with NTA-containing detergents, and inhalation of detergents during laundry or hand-washing activities (Anderson et al., 1985; NTP, 2011; Gupta and Sekhri, 2014).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1999b), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of nitrilotriacetic acid, on the basis of studies of mice and rats that showed tumours in both sexes after oral administration (NTP, 1977).

### Mechanistic evidence

No data were available to the previous Working Group on the genetic and related effects of nitrilotriacetic acid in exposed humans (IARC, 1999b). Since the last evaluation, studies have shown a dose-dependent increase in the frequency of both DNA breaks and micronucleated cells in primary cultures of kidney cells from human donors which were exposed to nitrilotriacetic acid (Robbiano et al., 1999). Moreover, the same genotoxic effects have been observed in the kidney of rats treated orally with a single dose or three successive daily doses of nitrilotriacetic acid, or in primary cultures of rat kidney cells exposed

to nitrilotriacetic acid (Robbiano et al., 1999). In another study, Robbiano et al. (2002) observed a modest but significant amount of DNA fragmentation in both urinary bladder and kidney of rats treated with nitrilotriacetic acid. In addition, a dose-dependent increase has been observed in the frequency of DNA single-strand breaks and alkali-labile sites in primary cultures of rat urinary bladder mucosa. Nitrilotriacetic acid induced DNA primary damage in isolated kidney cells from rats treated orally (Nesslany et al., 2008). Nitrilotriacetic acid gave positive results in a high-throughput in vitro steroidogenesis assay (increase of estradiol and progesterone synthesis) in human H295R adrenocortical carcinoma cells (Cardona and Rudel, 2021; Kay et al., 2024). Nitrilotriacetic acid is known to dissolve heavy metals and therefore to increase their genotoxicity (Celotti et al., 1987; Lanfranchi et al., 1988).

### Summary

Nitrilotriacetic acid, given by oral administration, caused tumours in mice and rats at several different tissue sites. Several studies have shown mechanistic evidence of KCs, mainly genotoxicity in experimental systems: human cells in vitro, and in rodents in vivo and in vitro. However, based on sparse mechanistic data on human primary cells (only one study) and no studies in exposed humans, it is unlikely that the classification would change. The Advisory Group therefore considered that an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of nitrilotriacetic acid is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 207 Palmitic acid (CAS No. 57-10-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Palmitic acid has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Palmitic acid is listed as a high production volume chemical by the OECD and the US EPA (OECD, 2009b; US EPA, 2024a). Palmitic acid is manufactured in and/or imported to the European Economic Area in quantities ranging from 10 000 to under 100 000 tonnes annually (ECHA, 2023g). Palmitic acid, a saturated fatty acid, is both a dietary component and an endogenously synthesized substance in the human body. It constitutes 20–30% of total fatty acids in membrane phospholipids and adipose triacylglycerols. Palmitic acid is a significant dietary component of palm oil (where it accounts for 44% of total fats), meat and dairy products, cocoa butter, and olive oil. It is used in a wide array of consumer products such as washing and cleaning products, coating products, polishes, waxes, and air care products, as well as in industrial applications such as leather treatment and textile processing, and as an ingredient in polymers, lubricants, and greases. Additionally, palmitic acid is present in various articles used in everyday life, including automotive care products, furniture, clothing, and electronic equipment. Its release into the environment can occur through various industrial processes, and it is found in long-life materials with varying release rates (Carta et al., 2017; ECHA, 2023g). Exposure occurs predominantly via the diet, as it is present in staple foods.

### Cancer in humans

The relation between circulating palmitic acid levels and development of cancer, particularly breast cancer, is the subject of continuing debate, because of conflicting results (Carta et al., 2017). A meta-analysis by Saadian-Elahi et al. (2004) and a prospective study by Bassett et al. (2016) both reported an association between palmitic acid levels in blood and increased risk of breast cancer. In contrast, a prospective study conducted in northern Italy by Pala et al. (2001) did not find a notable association between saturated fatty acids, including palmitic acid, and breast cancer risk.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Palmitic acid was administered subcutaneously to sixteen Swiss-Webster female mice at a dose of 1.0 mg three times per week for a total of 10 injections (total dose, 10 mg palmitic acid/1 ml tricaprylin). Eight mice were alive after 12 months, and six were alive after 18 months. One subcutaneous sarcoma was found after 19 months, two pulmonary neoplasms were found after 19 and 22 months, and one breast carcinoma was found after 22 months. Another group of 16 female Swiss-Webster mice received two subcutaneous injections of 5.0 mg palmitic acid per week for a total of 25 injections (total dose, 125 mg palmitic acid/2.5 ml tricaprylin). Eight mice were alive after 12 months and five were alive after 18 months. A subcutaneous sarcoma was found after 8 months, two breast carcinomas were found after 18 months, and one “leukaemia-lymphoma” was found after 12 months (Swern et al., 1970).

The EFSA Panel on Food Additives and Nutrient Sources Added to Food evaluated the effects of a series of fatty acids (lauric acid, oleic acid, myristic acid, capric acid, caprylic acid, stearic acid, and palmitic acid) on the development of cancer in animal models treated with an initiating agent. Except for linoleic acid at high doses, most of these studies reported protective effects of free fatty acids (Mortensen et al., 2017).

### Mechanistic evidence

Palmitic acid induced DNA damage in RINm5F insulin-secreting cells and in primary normal human fibroblasts (Beeharry et al., 2003). By contrast, it tested negative in three assays for genotoxicity (the bacterial reverse mutation assay, the in vitro mammalian mouse lymphoma gene mutation assay and the rat micronucleus test) (Paskaleva et al., 2014). Numerous studies have investigated the inflammatory effects of palmitic acid. While some studies observed pro-inflammatory effects on macrophages (reviewed in Hidalgo et al., 2021), others found anti-inflammatory effects (Zhu et al., 2021d; He et al., 2023; Wang et al., 2023j; Yu et al., 2023). With regard to cell proliferation, some studies observed that palmitic acid increased the proliferation of colorectal cancer cells (Fatima et al., 2019) and of prostate cancer cell lines in vitro (Landim et al., 2018; Binker-Cosen et al., 2017) and in vivo (Kim et al., 2019); it also promoted metastasis in several human oral cancer cell lines (Pascual et al., 2017). However, other studies showed that palmitic acid inhibited proliferation, impaired cell invasiveness, suppressed hepatocarcinoma growth in vitro and in mouse xenograft models (Lin et al., 2017), and inhibited cell proliferation of human colon cancer cell lines (Hu et al., 2021b) and breast cancer cells (Baumann et al., 2016).

### Summary

Data regarding cancer in humans and animal experiments are few and equivocal. In addition, there is inconsistent mechanistic evidence suggesting that palmitic acid exhibits KCs in experimental systems. There is also substantial evidence showing anti-carcinogenic properties of palmitic acid in experimental animals. In view of the limitations in the available data from all three evidence streams, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of palmitic acid is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 208 Parabens

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Parabens have not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. Parabens were given a priority rating of *high* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of mechanistic evidence.

## Exposure characterization

Parabens are a group of alkyl esters of *para*-hydroxybenzoic acid, commonly used as preservatives in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, and personal care products for their antimicrobial and antifungal effects (Giulivo et al., 2016; Parada et al., 2019). Parabens are added to prevent the growth of bacteria and fungi in these products to extend their shelf life. Common parabens include methylparaben, ethylparaben, propylparaben, and butylparaben (Giulivo et al., 2016; Parada et al., 2019). Human exposure is ubiquitous through use of products such as deodorants, creams, lotions, make-up, toothpaste, toiletries, shaving products, sanitary wipes, and food packaging. Parabens are also used as food additives (Giulivo et al., 2016). The general population is continuously exposed to parabens through skin absorption (paraben-containing personal care products), ingestion (paraben-containing food and water), inhalation (paraben-contaminated indoor dust), and environmental exposures (paraben-contaminated soil, sediment or sludge) (Giulivo et al., 2016). Parabens are excreted in urine, and their urinary concentration is a valid measure of exposure (Hager et al., 2022). People living in Europe and the USA have higher exposure to parabens than people in other regions such as Asia; females have higher exposure than males, and pregnant women have higher exposure than the general population (Wei et al., 2021b; Calafat et al., 2010).

## Cancer in humans

A few studies have evaluated paraben exposure and breast cancer risk in humans. In the Long Island Breast Cancer Study Project (a case–control study), the highest quintiles of urinary methyl-, propyl-, and total parabens were found to be associated with increased risks of breast cancer (Parada et al., 2019). The Multiethnic Cohort Study found a weakly inverse relationship between paraben exposure and breast cancer (Wu et al., 2021c). Other studies have evaluated associations between paraben exposure and other cancers. Urinary concentrations of parabens were found to be associated with the risk of lung cancer in adults (Mao et al., 2023b) and exposure to individual parabens to be associated with the risk of thyroid cancer and benign nodules in Wuhan, China (Wu et al., 2022c). Epidemiological studies have tended to rely on a single measurement of parabens in the urine, often after cancer was detected, making misclassification, reverse causality, and confounding a serious concern (Hager et al., 2022).

## Cancer in experimental animals

No carcinogenic effect was noted in several chronic toxicity studies on rodents when parabens were administered orally or subcutaneously (SCCS, 2021).

## Mechanistic evidence

With regard to genotoxicity, parabens were inactive in classical assays for mutagenicity (SCCS, 2021). Assessment of genotoxic effects of various parabens by the *Drosophila* Wing Spot Test (SMART) gave negative or insignificant results (Ayar and Uysal, 2013). Treatment of keratinocytes with UVR in combination with parabens revealed oxidative stress induction, ROS and nitric oxide production, and lipid peroxidation in vitro. Positive associations were seen between exposure to parabens and levels of some inflammatory biomarkers in exposed humans (Aung et al., 2019; Peinado et al., 2023). Methylparaben (0.003%) had little or no effect on cellular viability, oxidative stress, nitric oxide production, lipid peroxidation, and activation of nuclear transcription factors in HaCaT keratinocytes. Low-dose UVB also had little or no effect on these parameters in HaCaT keratinocytes. However, UVB exposure significantly increased cell death, oxidative stress, nitric oxide production, lipid peroxidation, and activation of transcription factors in methylparaben-treated HaCaT keratinocytes (Handa et al., 2006; van Meeuwen et al., 2008).

Parabens, together with their common metabolite *para*-hydroxybenzoic acid, possess estrogen agonist properties and androgen antagonist activity (Darbre and Harvey, 2008). Parabens interfered with the



homeostasis of the thyroid gland, affecting the levels of synthesis and secretion of thyroid hormones (Aker et al., 2018; Azeredo et al., 2023). Estrogenic activity of parabens was demonstrated in MCF-7 human breast cancer cells at concentrations that could be found in vivo (Byford et al., 2002; Fransway et al., 2019). Methyl-, propyl-, and butylparaben increased *GPR30* gene and protein expression in both breast cancer MCF-7 and immortalized MCF-10A cells. Propylparaben affected cAMP levels in MCF-10A cells (Wróbel and Gregoraszczyk, 2015).

In MCF-7 cells in vitro, methylparaben increased proliferation and induced canonical estrogen-responsive genes (pS2 and progesterone receptor). Mammospheres obtained using cells of MCF-7 and patient-derived xenografts exhibited increased size and upregulation of canonical stem cell markers (Lillo et al., 2017). The estrogenic activity of parabens measured in human breast carcinoma cells by luciferase reporter assay demonstrated its dependence on the length of the alkyl chain (Tong et al., 2023). Propylparabens promoted glycolysis in MCF-7 cells and enhanced the tricarboxylic acid cycle in mitochondria, inducing an increase in cell proliferation, which is also stimulated via a mitogen-activated protein kinase pathway of MCF-7 cells (Hager et al., 2022; Chen et al., 2023d). In addition to nuclear receptors ER $\alpha$  and ER $\beta$ , parabens also bind to estrogens and activate downstream signalling events (Zimmerman et al., 2016; Xu et al., 2019b). In MCF-7 cells, parabens inhibited aromatase, an enzyme involved in a rate-limiting step in steroidogenesis (van Meeuwen et al., 2008). In a reporter luciferase assay, a paraben mixture exhibited significant anti-androgenic activity, which exceeded the sum of the mixture components; only isobutylparaben produced a significant effect when applied alone (Chen et al., 2007; Kjaerstad et al., 2010).

Methylparaben and propylparaben significantly enhanced mammary tumour growth and pulmonary metastasis in female mice exposed to parabens (Tong et al., 2023). Moreover, methylparaben increased tumour size of MCF-7 xenografts and a patient-derived xenograft tumour expressing estrogen receptors (Lillo et al., 2017).

Parabens caused no effect on testosterone production in male ICR mice (Oishi, 2002). In male rats exposed to parabens orally, no effects on testosterone production and induced sperm DNA hypermethylation were observed (Park et al., 2012).

### Summary

Parabens are widely used as a component of cosmetics. Their carcinogenicity has not been demonstrated in humans or experimental animals; however, parabens stimulate breast cancer growth and metastasis. As endocrine disruptors, parabens exhibit KCs in experimental systems and in exposed humans. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of parabens to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 209 Piperonyl butoxide (CAS No. 51-03-6)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Piperonyl butoxide (PBO) has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *not classifiable as to its carcinogenicity to humans* (Group 3) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a). The WHO has published a risk assessment for PBO, as a synergist in insecticide-treated bed nets (WHO, 2021d).

### Exposure characterization

PBO is used synergistically in enhancing the efficacy of insecticides (such as pyrethrins) in pest control. PBO-enhanced long-lasting pyrethroid-treated mosquito nets were recommended by the WHO in 2017 for malaria prevention in areas with insecticide-resistant mosquito populations and have been used with great

success for malaria vector control in Africa (Gleave et al., 2017). Exposure to PBO in humans occurs in domestic, agricultural, industrial, and commercial settings. Specifically, exposure occurs through contact with pyrethroid–PBO-treated nets (Gleave et al., 2017), inhalation of PBO-containing sprays in aircraft (Berger-Preiss et al., 2004), aerial applications for malaria control (Macedo et al., 2010), inhalation of PBO-contaminated dust in agricultural areas (Navarro et al., 2023b), and prenatal exposure of children when pregnant women inhale PBO-contaminated dust (Liu et al., 2012). Residential exposure may be accidental (especially in children) through contact with insecticide formulations stored within the reach of children (Osimitz et al., 2009).

### **Cancer in humans**

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### **Cancer in experimental animals**

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *inadequate* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of PBO. At that time, the few studies of long-term toxicity on PBO showed no significant increase of the incidence of any tumour type in (C57BL/6 × C3H/Anf)F1 or (C57BL/6 × AKR)F1 mice given 464 mg/kg orally for 7 to 28 days followed by 1112 ppm in the diet for 17 months (Innes et al., 1969). There was no significant carcinogenic effect in Fischer 344 rats to which PBO was administered in the diet (NCI, 1979b), nor in B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice (NCI, 1979b).

Since the last evaluation, numerous studies have been conducted using mice and rats. In CD-1 mice, PBO treatment in the diet increased the incidence of eosinophilic adenoma in males and in females (Butler et al., 1998). PBO administered in the diet for 1 year induced significant increases in the incidence of hepatocellular adenoma, HCC, and haemangioendothelial sarcoma in male CD-1 mice in a dose-dependent manner (Takahashi et al., 1994a) and of HCC in both sexes of CD-1 mice (Takahashi et al., 1997). PBO treatment of male and female CD-1 mice in the diet for 79 weeks significantly increased the incidence of hepatocellular adenoma, but not HCC (Lake et al., 2020).

After treatment of Sprague-Dawley rats with PBO for 104/105 weeks, there was no increased incidence of neoplasia at any site (Butler et al., 1998). In male and female F344 rats, PBO treatment in the diet significantly increased the incidence of hepatocellular adenoma, HCCs, hepatocellular adenoma or HCC (combined), and haemangiosarcoma in both sexes, and in a dose-dependent manner (Takahashi et al., 1994b). A promoting effect of PBO was demonstrated using a two-stage liver carcinogenesis protocol in rats, combined with intraperitoneal injection of *N*-diethylnitrosamine (Muguruma et al., 2009).

### **Mechanistic evidence**

PBO lacked genotoxicity in bacterial mutation assays and in the CHO/HGPRT assay, both with and without metabolic activation. PBO was not found to be genotoxic when tested for chromosomal aberrations in CHO cells and for effects on UDS in rat liver primary cell cultures in vitro (Butler et al., 1996). Lack of effect of PBO on UDS was also demonstrated in precision-cut human liver slices (Beamand et al., 1996). PBO increased DNA methylation in the promoter region of *Wdr6* and *Cmtm6* genes, and decreased expression of these genes in non-neoplastic liver cells, in contrast to the effects in the majority of proliferative lesions (Yafune et al., 2013). PBO induced oxidative stress in several animal models. In a liver carcinogenesis model using male F344 rats, treatment with PBO in the diet significantly increased oxidative stress and the level of 8-OHdG (Muguruma et al., 2007). In a two-stage liver carcinogenesis model, combining *N*-diethylnitrosamine intraperitoneal injection and hepatectomy, piperonyl butoxide induced a significant increase in ROS (Muguruma et al., 2009). Treatment of p53-proficient and p53-deficient *gpt* mice with PBO caused significant increases in 8-OHdG levels in liver DNA (Tasaki et al., 2013). PBO also increased ROS production in microsomes but did not induce oxidative DNA damage (Kawai et al., 2010b).

Possible involvement of CAR activation associated with PBO was shown in some animal studies (Lake et al., 2020; Sakamoto et al., 2013). Piperonyl butoxide induced replicative DNA synthesis in human primary hepatocytes (Lake et al., 2020) and increased cell proliferation in rodents (Okamiya et al., 1998; Phillips et al., 1997; Kawai et al., 2010a). Piperonyl butoxide also increased expression of genes associated with activation of cell growth pathways, such as the Myc and E2F1 pathways (Kawai et al., 2009; Kawai et al., 2010b).

### Summary

There is significant exposure of humans to piperonyl butoxide, particularly through pesticides used for malaria control. No studies of cancer in humans were available. There is new evidence from cancer bioassays that piperonyl butoxide induces hepatic tumours in mice and rats. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that piperonyl butoxide exhibits KCs, including epigenetic alterations, oxidative stress, modulation of receptor-mediated effects, and cell proliferation, but not genotoxicity in several studies in experimental systems. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of piperonyl butoxide to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 210 Polyhexamethylene guanidine (CAS No. 31961-54-3)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Polyhexamethylene guanidine (PHMG) has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

PHMG is a biocide used in humidifier disinfectants, household and industrial cleaning disinfectants, paints, paper, plastics, fabric softeners, shampoos, wet wipes, and water purification (National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme, 1989; Song et al., 2014b; Yoon et al., 2017). Exposure can be through inhalation, skin contact, and handling treated water. PHMG is approved by the US FDA for disinfecting medical devices (Song et al., 2014b). Exposure to PHMG in humidifier disinfectants and the associated lung injury, particularly in children in the Republic of Korea, are well documented (Yoon et al., 2017; Song et al., 2022b).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

Intratracheal treatment of rats with polyhexamethylene guanidine phosphate (PHMG-p) for 52 weeks induced the formation of bronchioloalveolar adenomas and bronchioloalveolar carcinomas (Kim et al., 2021a, b).

### Mechanistic evidence

PHMG-p promoted ROS generation and increased the expression of DNA markers such as ATM and H2AX phosphorylation in human A549 and BEAS-2B cell lines (Park et al., 2019; Kang et al., 2022a). PHMG-p induced lung injury and transcriptomic changes that varied with the number of weeks after intratracheal exposure in rats, suggesting that PHMG may induce cell damage in lung tissue over time (Kim et al., 2021a). PHMG-p induced lung fibrosis after intratracheal instillation to experimental animals (Kim et al., 2021a, b; Kang et al., 2022a). Alveolar hyperplasia developed at 6 weeks after PHMG-p intratracheal

administration to rats and then decreased. Several studies show that PHMG-p induces apoptosis in human lung epithelial A549 cells (Jung et al., 2014; Park et al., 2019).

Long-term exposure of human pulmonary normal alveolar epithelial cells to low-dose PHMG-p caused transcriptional changes, mainly in lung cancer-associated genes, in a time-dependent manner (Lee et al., 2022b).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans were available for polyhexamethylene guanidine. There is sparse evidence for carcinogenesis in experimental animals. There is mechanistic evidence suggesting that polyhexamethylene guanidine phosphate exhibits KCs in experimental systems, which could support a classification of carcinogenicity of PHMG. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* Working Group evaluation of polyhexamethylene guanidine to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within 5 years)

## 211 Styrene–acrylonitrile (SAN) trimer

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Styrene–acrylonitrile (SAN) trimer has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme. SAN trimer was given a priority rating of *medium* by the 2019 Advisory Group on Priorities (IARC, 2019a), on the basis of human cancer evidence.

### Exposure characterization

SAN trimer exists as a mixture of isomers comprising two structural forms: 4-cyano-1,2,3,4-tetrahydro- $\alpha$ -methyl-1-naphthaleneacetonitrile (THNA; CAS No. 57 964-39-3) and 4-cyano-1,2,3,4-tetrahydro-1-naphthalenepropionitrile (THNP; CAS No. 57 964-40-6). These, in turn, consist of four and two stereoisomers, respectively. As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “SAN Trimer is a by-product of specific manufacturing processes for polymers of styrene and acrylonitrile, but it is currently not considered commercially useful (NTP, 2012b). SAN trimer has been found to contaminate soil and drinking-water in the USA (e.g. in New Jersey) (US EPA, 2014).” SAN trimer and acrylonitrile–butadiene–styrene copolymer are gaining in importance as food contact materials.

### Cancer in humans

The 2019 Advisory Group noted that there were a few epidemiological studies on the incidence of childhood cancer in New Jersey, USA, including three ecological studies and a case–control study (ATSDR, 2008). One study found increased incidence of soft-tissue sarcomas in a subgroup (females aged  $\leq 19$  years in 2004–2005) in two areas with contaminated drinking-water containing SAN trimer; however, exposure to other mutagens occurred in the drinking-water.

### Cancer in experimental animals

The one available study of cancer in experimental animals, in male and female F344 rats exposed to SAN trimer during gestation, during nursing through their mothers’ milk, and throughout their lifetimes through feed, did not find a significant increase in the incidence of any tumours (NTP, 2012b).

### Mechanistic evidence

As noted in the 2019 Advisory Group report, “A few studies relevant to key characteristics of carcinogens are available. SAN trimer was tested for genotoxicity by the US NTP. It was negative in bacterial tests but induced DNA damage in the combined micronucleus/comet assay in brain cells and in

leukocytes in juvenile rats (Hobbs et al., 2012). In the same study, SAN trimer also increased micronucleated reticulocytes in rat peripheral blood. It increased the incidence of chronic active inflammation in the liver of male F344/N rats). No subsequent persuasive mechanistic evidence has been reported.

### Summary

With little human cancer evidence, one negative bioassay and very few mechanistic data, the Advisory Group considered that an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of SAN trimer is unwarranted at present.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 212 Thioacetamide (CAS No. 62-55-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Thioacetamide has previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme as *possibly carcinogenic to humans* (Group 2B) in Supplement 7 in 1987 (IARC, 1987a), on the basis of *sufficient* evidence for cancer in experimental animals.

### Exposure characterization

Thioacetamide is a colourless, crystalline material with a slight sulfur-like odour, capable of dissolving in both water and ethanol. It was formerly used in various industries, but since the 1970s its application has mostly been confined to laboratory settings for specific tests and in the manufacturing of metal salt nanoparticles (Zhou et al., 2006; HSDB, 2009). In 2009, thioacetamide was manufactured primarily in India and used mainly in the USA (NTP, 2021a). Clinical laboratory technicians are the primary population at risk of exposure, primarily through inhalation and skin contact (NIOSH, 1990b; HSDB, 2009).

### Cancer in humans

No studies of cancer in humans were available to the Advisory Group.

### Cancer in experimental animals

In the previous evaluation (IARC, 1987a), there was *sufficient* evidence in experimental animals for the carcinogenicity of thioacetamide. Since that evaluation, numerous studies in mice and rats have been published, many with positive findings (Kuroda et al., 1987; Yang et al., 1997; Park et al., 2001; Lim, 2002; Yeh et al., 2004, 2008; Liu et al., 2008; El Sadda et al., 2023). There were also several new initiation–promotion studies (Kobayashi et al., 1999; Taniai et al., 2009; Mizukami et al., 2010; Kimura et al., 2013; Omura et al., 2014; Dwivedi and Jena, 2020).

### Mechanistic evidence

Several studies have investigated the molecular mechanisms of the toxicity of thioacetamide (Clawson et al., 1997; El-Ashmawy et al., 2014). Thioacetamide did not increase the proportion of micronucleated hepatocytes in treated rats; bone marrow micronucleus assays with thioacetamide also yielded negative results. The liver micronucleus assay using young adult rats singly dosed with thioacetamide also produced negative results. Thioacetamide gave positive results only in mouse bone marrow micronucleus assays (Sui et al., 2015). KRAS mutations have been observed in thioacetamide-induced tumours in rats (Colyn et al., 2022). Thioacetamide gave positive results in the mouse L5178Y lymphoma cell mutagenesis assay (Mitchell et al., 1988; Myhr and Caspary, 1988). Thioacetamide increased oxidative DNA damage, with increased generation of 8-OHdG; it also increased levels of cytokines IL-4, TNF $\alpha$ , and IFN $\gamma$  in rats treated orally with thioacetamide (Zargar et al., 2019; Purnomo et al., 2023). In thioacetamide-induced tumours in rats, activation of inflammatory pathways (e.g. upregulation of IL6 and NF $\kappa$ B gene expression and IL-6

protein levels), leading to hepatic fibrosis (Dwivedi and Jena, 2020; Colyn et al., 2022; Ezhilarasan, 2023), as well as oxidative stress (e.g. elevation of Nrf2, hydrogen peroxide, and superoxide anion) (Dwivedi and Jena, 2020; El-Far et al., 2020) have been observed. Thioacetamide-treated rats showed significant variations in hepatic oxidative stress markers such as reduced hepatic levels of GSH, SOD, and CAT, and increased levels of hepatic malondialdehyde, nitric oxide, hydroxyproline, and plasma TNF $\alpha$  (Bashandy et al., 2018).

### Summary

No studies of cancer in humans were available. There is already *sufficient* evidence that thioacetamide causes cancer in experimental animals. Mechanistic data show evidence for several KCs. When tested in vivo, thioacetamide was genotoxic in mice and increased oxidative DNA damage, oxidative stress, and inflammation in rats. However, considering the current classification of thioacetamide in Group 2B, without mechanistic evidence in human primary cells or in exposed humans the Advisory Group considered it unlikely that the evaluation would change and therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* re-evaluation of thioacetamide to be unwarranted.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 213 Triclosan (CAS No. 3380-34-5)

### Current IARC/WHO classification

Triclosan has not previously been evaluated by the *IARC Monographs* programme.

### Exposure characterization

Triclosan is an antimicrobial agent that has been commonly used in a variety of personal care and household products, such as soaps, toothpaste, deodorants, and hand sanitizers, due to its ability to inhibit the growth of bacteria (Fang et al., 2010). Triclosan is listed as a high production volume chemical by the US EPA (US EPA, 2024a). The worldwide production of triclosan has recently been estimated as 1500 tonnes per year, and 132 million litres of triclosan-containing products are used annually in the USA alone (Alfhili and Lee, 2019). Human exposure to triclosan is through personal care, household, and medical products. Triclosan is absorbed via the skin, mouth, gastrointestinal tract, and mucous membranes. Triclosan exposure can be measured in human biospecimens, such as urine, serum, milk, and adipose tissue (Cai et al., 2023b). Its ubiquitous use exposes the general population through contact with triclosan-containing consumer products and through the consumption of food and drinking-water contaminated with triclosan (Fang et al., 2010). Triclosan-coated sutures have applications for infection-control in surgery (Yamashita et al., 2016).

### Cancer in humans

A few epidemiological studies have investigated the association between triclosan and breast cancer. In a case–control study that included 302 breast cancer patients and 302 healthy individuals in Wuhan, China, triclosan level in urine was associated with breast cancer risk (Cai et al., 2023b). However, in the Multiethnic Cohort Study, urinary triclosan was inversely associated with breast cancer (OR, 0.83; 95% CI, 0.66–1.04) (Wu et al., 2021c).

### Cancer in experimental animals

Triclosan has been examined for carcinogenicity in several species. There was no evidence of carcinogenicity in the rat and hamster. In mice, there was evidence of carcinogenicity (US EPA, 2018c; SCCS, 2022). The incidence of liver tumours in groups of CD-1 mice treated with triclosan for 18 months was statistically significantly greater than that in controls for both sexes (Rodricks et al., 2010). In male

B6C3F<sub>1</sub> mice receiving dermal applications of triclosan for 104 weeks, there were positive trends in the incidence of HCC and hepatocellular adenoma or carcinoma (combined), with the incidence being significantly increased for both. The same treatment of female B6C3F<sub>1</sub> caused a positive trend in the incidence of pancreatic islet adenoma (Fang et al., 2024).

Triclosan substantially accelerates HCC development, acting as a liver tumour promoter of *N*-diethylnitrosamine-induced carcinogenesis. Six-month exposure of homozygous null Car<sup>-/-</sup> or heterozygous Car (Car<sup>+/-</sup>) mice to triclosan in drinking-water after a single intraperitoneal injection of *N*-diethylnitrosamine at the age of 15 days increased the number of detectable HCCs up to 4.5-fold; 25% of mice treated with *N*-diethylnitrosamine only exhibited small nodules, whereas > 80% of those treated with both *N*-diethylnitrosamine and triclosan developed tumours. Maximal tumour diameter was also 3.5-fold larger in mice treated with triclosan (Yueh et al., 2014).

### Mechanistic evidence

Triclosan did not exhibit positive responses for mutagenicity in the microplate Ames test when *S. typhimurium* strains TA98, TA100, TA1535, TA1537 were employed with and without activation with rat S9 fraction according to OECD TG 471 (Chrzą et al., 2024; SCCS, 2022). In the comet assay on HaCaT cells in vitro, performed according to OECD TG 489, the percentage of DNA in the tail significantly increased at the highest tested non-cytotoxic concentration (10 µg/mL) of triclosan, and a clear concentration-dependent positive response was observed (Chrzą et al., 2024). In the mammalian chromosome aberration test in vitro, performed using human peripheral lymphocytes according OECD TG 473, triclosan was clearly positive at the highest tested non-cytotoxic concentration (10 µg/mL) after treatment for 4 hours (Chrzą et al., 2024). DNA fragmentation was quantified by the comet assay after exposure to various concentrations of triclosan in cells of macroinvertebrate *Chironomus riparius* larvae (Martínez-Paz et al., 2013).

In the breast cancer case–control study described above, exposure to triclosan was significantly positively correlated with relative telomere length and with 8-iso-prostaglandin F<sub>2α</sub> (8-isoPGF<sub>2α</sub>) and 4-hydroxy-2-nonenal-mercapturic acid (HNE-MA) (Cai et al., 2023b).

Triclosan influenced epigenetic enzyme regulation: treatment of the SCC-15 cell line decreased mRNA expression of DNMT3A and DNMT3B after 24- and 48-hour treatment (Sinicropi et al., 2022; Szychowski et al., 2022).

In both CD-1 and C57BL/6 mice, triclosan induced a dose-dependent increase in relative liver weight and centrilobular hypertrophy; hepatocyte DNA synthesis was also increased in a dose-related pattern and a significant increase in CAR/PXR and PPARα responsive genes was observed (Wang et al., 2017b). After treatment of male C57BL/6 mice with triclosan for 8 months, higher expression of several markers and genes, including Ki-67, c-Myc, and Cyclin D1, increased levels of superoxide and a marked increase in expression of oxidative stress responsive genes, including haem oxygenase 1, NADPH hydrogenase quinone 1, and glutathione-*S*-transferase were observed in livers of animals (Yueh et al., 2014).

Triclosan caused adverse effects on immune system function (Barros et al., 2010; Clayton et al., 2011; Anderson et al., 2016).

Triclosan in mice has been classified as a peroxisome proliferator (Rodricks et al., 2010; Lee et al., 2019). Subcutaneous injections of triclosan upregulated ER-dependent signalling pathways in MCF-7 xenografts (Lee et al., 2014). Triclosan stimulated ovarian cancer growth by regulating cell-cycle- and apoptosis-related genes via an ER-dependent pathway (Kim et al., 2014b).

Triclosan enhanced LNCaP prostate cancer cell proliferation and migration, regulating cell-cycle- and metastasis-related genes via the AR signalling pathway (Kim et al., 2015b). Proliferation of MCF-7 breast cancer cells in vitro was enhanced by triclosan via an ER-dependent signalling pathway (Lee et al., 2014). In BG-1 cells, triclosan induced cell-growth-regulating genes encoding cyclin D1, p21, and BAX, related to the cell cycle and apoptosis, via an ER-dependent pathway (Kim et al., 2014b). Triclosan promoted

epithelial–mesenchymal transition in H460 lung cancer cells, along with migratory and invasive abilities (Winitthana et al., 2014).

Triclosan interacted with several nuclear receptors, including hPXR, hCAR1, hCAR3, and rCAR to regulate hepatic catabolism and downstream thyroid hormone homeostasis in both rat and human (Paul et al., 2013). Triclosan demonstrated anticancer activity against prostate cancer cells via inhibition of fatty acid synthase (Sadowski et al., 2014).

### Summary

Two studies in humans found inconsistent evidence of an association of triclosan with breast cancer. There is evidence from studies of cancer in experimental animals suggesting that triclosan has carcinogenic activity in mice. In addition, there is mechanistic evidence that triclosan exhibits KCs. The Advisory Group therefore considered an *IARC Monographs* evaluation of triclosan to be warranted.

**Recommendation:** High priority (and ready for evaluation within < 2.5 years)

## 214 Diabetes

The Advisory Group considered the agent to be an endogenous condition and therefore ineligible for evaluation.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 215 Reduction of sex hormones in people older than 35–40 years

The Advisory Group considered the agent to be an endogenous condition and therefore ineligible for evaluation.

**Recommendation:** No priority

## 216 Violation of tissue renewal (regeneration) in people older than 35–40 years

The Advisory Group considered the agent to be an endogenous condition and therefore ineligible for evaluation.

**Recommendation:** No priority

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## List of Abbreviations

AADC	aromatic L-amino acid decarboxylase
AAARP	American Association of Retired Persons
AAV	adeno-associated viruses
ABS	acrylonitrile-butadiene-styrene
ACE	angiotensin converting enzyme
ACGIH	American Conference of Governmental Industrial Hygienists
AChE	acetylcholinesterase
ADHD	attention deficit hyperactivity disorder
ADI	acceptable daily intake
ADME	absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion
AdV	adenoviruses
AFFF	aqueous film-forming foam
AGRICAN	AGRiculture & CANcer
AHR	aryl receptor
AHS	Agricultural Health Study
ALAN	artificial light at night
ALCL	anaplastic large-cell lymphoma
ALD	adrenoleukodystrophy
ALL	acute lymphoblastic leukaemia
AML	acute myeloid leukaemia
AMPA	aminomethylphosphonic acid
AOEL	acceptable operator exposure level
AOPP	advanced oxidation protein products
AR	androgen receptor
ARG	arginase
ART	assisted reproductive techniques
ASB	artificially sweetened beverages
ATG	anti-thymocyte globulin
ATP	adenosine triphosphate
BaP	benzo[ <i>a</i> ]pyrene
BAX	BCL2 associated X, apoptosis regulator
BBN	<i>N</i> -butyl- <i>N</i> -(4-hydroxybutyl)nitrosamine
BBP	butyl benzyl phthalate
BCAC	Breast Cancer Association Consortium
BCC	basal cell carcinoma
BCE	black cohosh extracts
BMI	body mass index
BPA	bisphenol A
BPD	bronchopulmonary dysplasia
BPF	bisphenol F
BPS	bisphenol S
BRAF	B-Raf proto-oncogene
BTX	benzene, toluene, xylene
CAR	constitutive androstane receptor
CAREX	CARcinogen EXposure
CAS	chemical abstracts service
CAT	catalase

CBMC	cord blood mononuclear cells
CDC	Centers for Disease Control and Prevention
CHO	chinese hamster ovary
CHOP	cyclophosphamide, daunorubicin, vincristine, and prednisone
CI	confidence interval
CIC	Carcinogen Identification Committee
CLL	chronic lymphocytic leukaemia
CNF	carbon nanofibres
CNS	central nervous system
COC	cumulus–oocyte complexes
COSMOS	European Cohort Study of Mobile Phone Use and Health
CRC	colorectal cancer
CYP	cytochrome P450
DBCP	1,2-Dibromo-3-chloropropane
DBP	dibutyl phthalate
DD	dopamine-deficient mice
DEET	<i>N,N</i> -diethyl- <i>meta</i> -toluamide
DEHP	Di(2-ethylhexyl) phthalate
DEN	diethylnitrosamine
DHFR	dihydrofolate reductase
DINCH	diisononyl cyclohexane-1,2-dicarboxylate
DINP	diisononyl phthalate
DLBCL	diffuse large B-cell lymphoma
DMBA	7,12-dimethylbenz[ <i>a</i> ]anthracene
DMSO	dimethyl sulfoxide
DMSP	Defense Meteorological Satellite Program
DWCNT	double-walled carbon nanotube
EARLI	Early Autism Risk Longitudinal Investigation
EBDC	ethylenebisdithiocarbamate
EBV	Epstein–Barr virus
ECHA	European Chemicals Agency
ECS	e-cigarette smoke
EDA	ethylenediamine
EDBC	ethylenedithiocarbamate
EFSA	European Food Safety Authority
EGFR	epidermal growth factor receptor protein
ELF	extremely low-frequency magnetic fields
ELISA	enzyme-linked immunosorbent assay
EMA	European Medicines Agency
EMF	electromagnetic field
EMP	elongate mineral particles
EMT	epithelial–mesenchymal transition
ENDS	electronic nicotine delivery systems
EPIC	European Prospective Investigation into Cancer and Nutrition
EPICAP	EPIdemiological study of Prostate CANcer
EPTC	<i>S</i> -ethyl- <i>N,N</i> -dipropylthiocarbamate
ER	estrogen receptor
ESCAPE	Esophageal Squamous Cell Carcinoma African Prevention Research
EtO	ethylene oxide

ETU	ethylene thiourea
EV	epidermodysplasia verruciformis
FD&C	Federal Food Drug and Cosmetic Act
FISH	fluorescence in situ hybridization
FMO	flavin-containing monooxygenase
FSH	follicle-stimulating hormone
GBCA	gadolinium-based contrast agents
GDM	global DNA methylation
GDNF	glial cell line-derived neurotrophic factor
GF	germ-free
GJIC	gap junctional intercellular communication
GLP	Good Laboratory Practice
GM	geometric mean
GPOR	g protein-coupled estrogen receptor
GRAS	generally recognized as safe
GSH	glutathione
GSTT1	glutathione <i>S</i> -transferase theta 1
GTH	gonadotropin hormone
HAA	haloacetic acid
HAPI	highly aggressively proliferating immortalized
HBP	hydroxybiphenyl
HBV	hepatitis B virus
HCC	hepatocellular carcinoma
HCMV	human cytomegalovirus
HCV	hepatitis C virus
HDV	hepatitis D virus
HFR	halogen flame retardants
HL	Hodgkin lymphoma
HMBP	2-Hydroxy-4-methoxybenzophenone
HPRT	hypoxanthine-guanine phosphoribosyl transferase
HPV	human papillomavirus
HR	hazard ratio
HRT	hormone replacement therapy
HSCT	haematopoietic stem cell transplantation
HUVEC	human umbilical vein endothelial cells
HWSB	healthy worker survivor bias
ICC	intrahepatic cholangiocarcinoma
ICSI	intra-cytoplasmic sperm injection
IFN	interferon
IgA	immunoglobulin A
IgG	immunoglobulin G
INCHEM	Internationally Peer Reviewed Chemical Safety Information
INN	international nonproprietary name
ILO	International Labour Organization
IPCS	International Programme on Chemical Safety
IPL	intense pulsed light
IPSE	IL-4 inducing principle from <i>S. mansoni</i> eggs
ISA	Integrated Science Assessment
IUD	intrauterine device

IVF	in vitro fertilization
JAK	janus kinase
JBRC	Japan Bioassay Research Center
JECFA	Joint FAO/WHO Expert Committee on Food Additives
JMPR	Joint FAO/WHO Meeting on Pesticide Residues
JNK	jun N-terminal kinase
KC	KCs of carcinogens
KSHV	kaposi sarcoma-associated herpesvirus
LAN	light at night
LCV	leukocytoclastic vasculitis
LED	light-emitting diode
LGBTQ	lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, or queer
LH	luteinizing hormone
LMIC	low- and middle-income countries
LNCaP	Lymph Node Carcinoma of the Prostate cell line
LPC	long-term progestin-only contraceptives
LPS	lipopolysaccharide
LT	large T antigen
LV	lentivirus
MALT	mucosa associated lymphoid tissue
MAPK	mitogen-activated protein kinase
MBzP	monobenzyl phthalate
MCC	merkel cell carcinoma
MCL	mantle cell lymphoma
MCV	merkel cell polyomavirus
MDA	malondialdehyde
MDP	muramyl dipeptide
MDS	myelodysplastic syndrome
MDSC	myeloid-derived suppressor cells
MEK	anti-MAPK kinase
MELN	ERE- $\beta$ Glob-Luc-SVNeo plasmid
MGUS	monoclonal gammopathy of undetermined significance
MIG	monokine induced by IFN $\gamma$
MINCH	monoisononyl ester
MLD	metachromatic leukodystrophy
MPA	medroxyprogesterone acetate
MRI	magnetic resonance imaging
MWCNT	multiwalled carbon nanotubes
MYC	MYC proto-oncogene
NADH	nicotinamide adenine dinucleotide
NAFLD	non-alcoholic fatty liver disease
NANoREG	EU framework for the safety assessment of nanomaterials
NAPP	North American Pooled Project
NCE	normochromatic erythrocytes
NCTR	National Center for Toxicological Research
NHANES	National Health and Nutrition Examination Survey
NHBE	normal human bronchial epithelial
NHL	non-Hodgkin lymphoma
NIOSH	National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health

NK	natural killer
NMDA	<i>N</i> -methyl-D-aspartate
NMSC	non-melanoma skin cancer
NNK	4-( <i>N</i> -nitrosomethylamino)-1-(3-pyridyl)-1-butanone
NNN	<i>N'</i> -nitrosonornicotine
NOAEL	no observed adverse effect level
NOCCA	Nordic Occupational Cancer Study
NSW	night shift work
NTA	nitritotriacetic acid
NTP	National Toxicology Program
OBESO	Origen Bioquímico y Epigenético del Sobre peso y la Obesidad
OECD	Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development
OMEGA	Ovariumstimulatie en Gynecologische Aandoeningen
ORAL	Oral Rheumatoid Arthritis Trial
OSHA	Occupational Safety and Health Administration
PA	pyrrolizidine alkaloids
PAH	polycyclic aromatic hydrocarbons
PAMS	PA mutational signature
PBDE	pentabromodimethyl ether
PBO	piperonyl butoxide
PBL	peripheral blood lymphocytes
PBMC	peripheral blood mononuclear cells
PCB	polychlorinated biphenyls
PCE	polychromatic erythrocytes
PCNA	proliferating cell nuclear antigen
PCR	polymerase chain reaction
PCT	procalcitonin
PDC	plasmacytoid dendritic cells
PEF	peak expiratory flow
PFAS	per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances
PHMG	polyhexamethylene guanidine
PLA	polylactic acid
PLCO	prostate, lung, colorectal, and ovarian
PLD	pegulated liposomal doxorubicin
PM	particulate matter
PMS	premenstrual syndrome
PMTDI	provisional maximum tolerable daily intake
PON1	para oxonase-1
PPAR	peroxisome proliferator-activated receptor
PR	progesterone receptor
PRS	polygenic risk score
PTEN	phosphatase and tensin homologue
PTLD	post-transplant lymphoproliferative disorder
PTWI	provisional tolerable weekly intake
PUMA	Pooled Uranium Miners Analysis
PVC	polyvinyl chloride
PXR	pregnane X receptor
RB	retinoblastoma
RCF	refractory ceramic fibres

RCS	respirable crystalline silica
REE	rare earth elements
ROS	reactive oxygen species
RR	Relative risk
SAM	<i>S</i> -adenosylmethionine
SAN	styrene–acrylonitrile
SBC	subsequent breast cancer
SCC	squamous cell carcinoma
SCE	sister-chromatid exchange
SCID	severe combined immunodeficiency
SDH	succinate dehydrogenase
SEA	soluble egg antigens
SEER	Surveillance, Epidemiology, and End Results
SH	sulfhydryl
SHGB	sex hormone-binding globulin
SIR	standardized incidence ratio
SLL	Small B-cell lymphocytic lymphoma
SMART	<i>drosophila</i> Wing Spot Test
SMR	Standardized mortality ratio
SNP	single-nucleotide polymorphism
SOD	superoxide dismutase
SSB	sugar-sweetened beverage
StAR	steroidogenic acute regulatory protein
SWCNT	single-walled carbon nanotubes
TBARS	thiobarbituric acid-reactive substances
TBP	2,4,6-Tribromophenol
TCEP	tris(2-chloroethyl) phosphate
TCPP	tris(chloropropyl) phosphate
TGFA	transforming growth factor alpha
THM	trihalomethanes
THS	tobacco heating system
TIDES	The Infant Development and the Environment Study
TIPS	transtracheal intrapulmonary spraying
TLV	threshold limit value
TNF $\alpha$	tumour necrosis factor alpha
TPA	12- <i>O</i> -tetradecanoylphorbol-13-acetate
TSH	thyroid-stimulating hormone
TSNA	tobacco-specific nitrosamines
TWA	time-weighted average
UDS	unscheduled DNA synthesis
UFP	ultra-fine particles
UK	United Kingdom
UPF	ultra-processed food
US	United States
US EPA	United States Environmental Protection Agency
US FDA	United States Food and Drug Administration
UV	ultraviolet
UVB	ultraviolet B radiation
VEGF	vascular endothelial growth factor

VIIRS	visible Infrared Imaging Radiometer Suite
VZV	varicella zoster virus
WHI	Women's Health Initiative
YAP	yes-activating protein



**Annex 1. List of participants**

***IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans***

**Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for the *IARC Monographs*  
during 2025–2029**

**Lyon, France: 19–22 March 2024**

**LIST OF PARTICIPANTS**

IARC requests that Meeting Observers and others outside the Advisory Group do not contact or lobby Advisory Group Members, send them written materials, or offer favours that could appear to be linked to their participation. (You may send pertinent written materials to IARC.) IARC will ask participants to report all such contacts and will publicly reveal any attempt to influence the meeting. Thank you for your cooperation.

Advisory Group Members serve in their individual capacities as scientists and not as representatives of their government or any organization with which they are affiliated. Affiliations are provided for identification purposes only.

**Members**

Robert Barouki, Institut national de la santé et de la recherche médicale (INSERM), France  
Silvia Berlanga de Moraes Barros, University of São Paulo (retired), Brazil  
Dinesh Barupal, Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai, USA<sup>1</sup>  
Laura Beane Freeman, Division of Cancer, Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, USA  
Amy Berrington de González, The Institute of Cancer Research, UK  
Parveen Bhatti, British Columbia Cancer Research Institute, Canada  
Gloria Calaf, Instituto de Alta Investigación, Universidad de Tarapacá, Chile  
Rajesh Dikshit, Center for Cancer Epidemiology, Tata Memorial Hospital, India (withdrew)  
Joakim Dillner, Karolinska Institutet, Sweden  
Karima El Rhazi, Department of Epidemiology and Public Health, Faculty of Medicine of Fez, Morocco  
Renée Turzanski Fortner, Cancer Registry of Norway and German Cancer Research Center, Norway  
Lin Fritschi, Curtin University, Australia  
Shoji Fukushima, Japan Bioassay Research Center, Japan  
Lode Godderis, Leuven University and Belgian Service for Prevention and Protection (IDEWE), Belgium  
Manolis Kogevinas, Barcelona Institute for Global Health, Spain  
Dirk Lachenmeier, Chemical and Veterinary Investigation Agency Karlsruhe (CVUA), Germany  
Daniele Mandrioli, Ramazzini Institute, Italy  
Scott Masten, National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, USA

<sup>1</sup> Dr Barupal reported receiving personal consultancy fees from Brightseed Bio Inc. for processing untargeted high-resolution mass spectrometry metabolomics datasets and for generating mass spectral libraries for authentic chemical standards. Brightseed Bio's products do not appear to present a competing interest for the agents considered at the present meeting.

Mazvita Molleen Muchengeti, National Cancer Registry, National Health Laboratory Service, South Africa

Richard T. Niemeier, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health, Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, USA

Jane Pappas, Health Canada, Canada

Susan Peters, Institute for Risk Assessment Sciences, Utrecht University, The Netherlands

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Mark Purdue, Division of Cancer Epidemiology and Genetics, National Cancer Institute, USA

Elio Riboli, School of Public Health, Imperial College London, UK

Teresa Rodriguez, Autonomous University of Nicaragua (retired), Nicaragua

Tiina Santonen, Finnish Institute of Occupational Health, Finland

Vivi Schlünssen, Department of Public Health, Aarhus University, Denmark

Marianna G. Yakubovskaya, NN Blokhin National Medical Research Center of Oncology, Russian Federation

#### **Invited Specialists**

None

#### **Representatives of national and international health agencies**

Yoonjoo Choi, National Cancer Center, Republic of Korea

Byungmi Kim, National Cancer Center, Republic of Korea

#### **Observers**

Remi Bars, Regulatory Science Associates, France<sup>2</sup>

Janice Britt, ToxStrategies, USA<sup>3</sup>

#### **IARC Secretariat**

Ayat Ahmadi, *IARC Monographs* Programme

Lamia Benbrahim-Tallaa, *IARC Monographs* Programme

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Shalini Kulasingam, *IARC Monographs* Programme

Béatrice Lauby-Secretan, *IARC Handbooks* Programme

Richard MacLehose, *IARC Monographs* Programme

Federica Madia, *IARC Monographs* Programme

<sup>2</sup> Dr Bars reported being a salaried employee of Regulatory Science Associates and that CropLife International will sponsor his travel to and attendance at the present meeting.

<sup>3</sup> Dr Britt reported being a salaried employee of ToxStrategies LLC, which will sponsor her travel to and attendance at the present meeting.

Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities  
for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029

Heidi Mattock, *IARC Monographs* Programme (Editor)

Elisa Pasqual, *IARC Monographs* Programme

Moez Sanaa, Department of Nutrition and Food Safety Standards / Scientific Advice on Food and  
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Mary Schubauer-Berigan, *IARC Monographs* Programme (Programme Head & Responsible Officer)

Joachim Schüz, IARC Environment and Lifestyle Epidemiology Branch<sup>4</sup>

Eero Suonio, *IARC Monographs* Programme

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Jiri Zavadil, IARC Epigenomics and Mechanisms Branch

**NOTE REGARDING CONFLICTS OF INTERESTS:** Each participant first received a preliminary invitation with the request to complete and sign the IARC/WHO Declaration of Interests, which covers employment and consulting activities, individual and institutional research support, and other financial or non-financial interests (e.g. public statements and positions related to the subject of the meeting).

Official invitations were extended after careful assessment of any declared interests that might constitute a conflict of interest. Pertinent and significant conflicts are disclosed here. Information about other potential conflicts that are not disclosed may be sent to the Head of the *IARC Monographs* programme at [imo@iarc.who.int](mailto:imo@iarc.who.int).

The Declarations were updated and reviewed again at the opening of the meeting.

<sup>4</sup> Dr Schüz reports that this spouse is a salaried employee of Merck group. None of the pharmaceutical agents at the meeting are produced by Merck group.

## **Annex 2. Meeting agenda**

### ***IARC Monographs on the Identification of Carcinogenic Hazards to Humans* Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities for IARC Monographs during 2025–2029 Lyon, France, 19-22 March 2024**

#### **Tuesday, 19 March 2024**

09:00-09:30	Registration, lobby
09:30-10:30	Plenary session: introductions and discussion of prioritization criteria
10:30-11:00	Group photo followed by coffee break, lobby
11:00-11:30	Presentation from Dr Dinesh K. Barupal, Mount Sinai School of Medicine
11:30-13:00	Discipline subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
13:00-14:00	Lunch, IARC cafeteria
14:00-16:00	Discipline subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
16:00-16:30	Coffee break and payment of <i>per diem</i> & dinner reservation, lobby
16:30-18:00	Subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
18:00 - 19:00	Chairs' coordination meeting

#### **Wednesday, 20 March 2024**

09:00-9:30	Plenary session: progress report from discipline subgroups
09:30-10:30	Discipline subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
10:30-11:00	Coffee break, lobby
11:00-13:00	Discipline subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
13:00-14:00	Lunch, IARC cafeteria
14:00-16:00	Discipline subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
16:00-16:30	Coffee break and payment of <i>per diem</i> & dinner reservation, lobby
16:30-18:00	Subgroup sessions: exposure, human cancer, cancer bioassays, mechanisms
18:00 - 19:00	Chairs' coordination meeting

#### **Thursday, 21 March 2024**

09:00-10:30	Plenary session: results of discipline subgroups; overview of agent-type subgroup work
10:30-11:00	Coffee break, lobby
11:00-13:00	Agent-type subgroup sessions (A-E)
13:00-14:00	Lunch, IARC cafeteria
14:00-15:45	Agent-type subgroup sessions (A-E)
15:45-16:15	Coffee break, lobby
16:15-17:30	Agent-type subgroup sessions (A-E)
17:30-18:00	Chairs' coordination meeting
18:30-21:00	Group apéritif dînatoire, Salons d'Anthouard, 249 Rue Marcel Mérieux, 69007 Lyon

#### **Friday, 22 March 2024**

09:00-10:30	Plenary session: Finalize prioritizations
10:30-11:00	Coffee break, lobby
11:00-13:00	Plenary session: Finalize prioritizations
13:00-14:00	Lunch, IARC cafeteria
14:00-15:45	Plenary session: Advice on miscellaneous topics
15:45-16:15	Coffee break, lobby
16:15-18:00	Plenary session: report finalization and closing remarks

### Annex 3. Search terms used to identify studies for detailed narrative descriptions

Narrative descriptions – search terms used	
Search string label	Search terms
Human exposure	AGENT NAME AND (exposure OR exposed OR occurrence OR biomonitoring) AND human* [MeSH Terms]
Tumor search	AGENT NAME AND (neoplasm* OR carcinogen* OR malignan* OR tumor OR tumors OR tumour OR tumours OR carcinoma OR cancer OR cancers OR mesothelioma OR lymphoma OR melanom* OR leukemia OR myeloma OR sarcoma) AND ("bioassay" OR "initiation-promotion" OR "co-carcinogenicity" OR "neoplasms")
Cancer epidemiology	AGENT NAME AND (neoplasm* OR carcinogen* OR malignan* OR tumor OR tumors OR tumour OR tumours OR carcinoma OR cancer OR cancers OR mesothelioma OR lymphoma OR melanom* OR leukemia OR myeloma OR sarcoma) AND ("Epidemiology"[Mesh] OR "Epidemiologic Studies"[Mesh] OR epidemiolog* OR case-referent OR case-control OR "Occupational Exposure"[Mesh] OR workers OR cohort)
Absorption, distribution, metabolism, and excretion	AGENT NAME AND (ADME[tiab] OR tissue-distribut*[tiab] OR "distribution"[All Fields] OR protein-bound[tiab] OR protein-bind*[tiab] OR plasma-protein[tiab] OR "pharmacokinetics"[Subheading] OR "pharmacokinetics"[tw] OR "toxicokinetics"[tw] OR "pharmacokinetics"[MeSH Terms] OR Metabolite*[tiab] OR metabolism[tiab] OR Metabolic*[tiab] OR Biotransformation[tiab] OR bioavailability[tiab] OR excretion[tw] OR elimination[tw] OR urine[tiab] OR Urination[tiab] OR feces[tiab] OR fecal[tiab] OR biliary[tiab] OR Bile[tiab] OR Renal Elimination[mh])
Causes DNA alterations (KC 1-3)	AGENT NAME AND (("Mutation"[Mesh] OR "Cytogenetic Analysis"[Mesh] OR "Mutagens"[Mesh] OR "Oncogenes"[Mesh] OR "Genetic Processes"[Mesh] OR "genomic instability"[MesH] OR chromosom* OR clastogen* OR "genetic toxicology" OR "strand break" OR "unscheduled DNA synthesis" OR "DNA damage" OR "DNA adducts" OR "SCE" OR "chromatid" OR micronucle* OR mutagen* OR "DNA repair" OR "UDS" OR "DNA fragmentation" OR "DNA cleavage"))
Induces epigenetic alterations (KC 4)	AGENT NAME AND ("rna"[MeSH] OR "epigenesis, genetic"[MesH] OR rna OR "rna, messenger"[MeSH] OR "rna" OR "messenger rna" OR mrna OR "histones"[MeSH] OR histones OR epigenetic OR miRNA OR methylation)
Induces oxidative stress (KC 5)	AGENT NAME AND ("reactive oxygen species"[MeSH Terms] OR "reactive oxygen species"[All Fields] OR "oxygen radicals"[All Fields] OR "oxidative stress"[MeSH Terms] OR "oxidative"[All Fields] OR "oxidative stress"[All Fields] OR "free radicals"[All Fields])
Induces chronic inflammation (KC 6)	AGENT NAME AND ((chronic[tw] AND inflammation[MH]) OR chronic inflamm*[tw] OR inflammatory response*[tw] OR inflammatory marker*[tw] OR markers of inflammation[tw] OR inflammatory index[tw] OR systemic inflamm*[tw] OR tissue inflammation[tw] OR inflammatory potential[tw] OR inflammatory foci[tw] OR inflammatory state*[tw] OR inflammatory condition*[tw] OR IL-8[tw] OR interleukin-8[tw] OR IL-6[tw] OR interleukin-6[tw])
Causes immunosuppression (KC 7)	AGENT NAME AND (Immunosuppression[MH] OR Killer Cells, Natural[MH] OR CD4-Positive T-Lymphocytes[MH] OR immunosuppress*[tw] OR immune response*[tw] OR immune function*[tw] OR immune status[tw] OR immune state*[tw] OR immune competence[tw] OR immune impairment[tw] OR immune dysregulation[tw] OR humoral immunity[tw] OR cell-mediated immunity[tw] OR NK[tw] OR Natural Killer[tw] OR CD4[tw] OR T4 Cell*[tw] OR T4 Lymphocyte[tw] OR IgM)

## Narrative descriptions – search terms used

Search string label	Search terms
Modulates receptor mediated effects (KC 8)	AGENT NAME AND (Androgen Antagonists[Mesh:NoExp] OR Androgen Receptor Antagonists[Mesh:NoExp] or Estrogen Antagonists[MH] or Estrogen Receptor Modulators[MH:NoExp] or Gonadal Hormones[MH] or Thyroid Hormones[MH] or Melatonin[MH] OR Endocrine Disruptors[MH] OR Receptors, Steroid[MH] OR Receptors, Cytoplasmic and Nuclear[MH] OR Receptors, Aryl Hydrocarbon[MH] OR Androgen*[tw] OR Estradiol[tw] OR Estrogen*[tw] OR Progesterone[tw] OR Testosterone[tw] OR thyroid[tw] OR Melatonin[tw] OR Endocrine disrupt*[tw] OR Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptor[tw] OR PPAR[tw] OR constitutive androstane receptor [tw] OR farnesoid X-activated receptor[tw] OR liver X receptor[tw] OR Retinoid X receptor[tw] OR Aryl hydrocarbon receptor[tw] OR Ah receptor[tw])
Causes immortalization (KC 9)	AGENT NAME AND (Cell Transformation, Neoplastic[MH:NoExp] OR Cell Transformation, Viral[MH] OR Telomere[MH] OR Telomere Shortening[MH] OR Telomere Homeostasis[MH] OR cell transformation[tw] OR tumorigen transformation[tw] tumorigenic transformation[tw] OR neoplastic transformation[tw] OR carcinogen transformation[tw] OR carcinogenic transformation[tw] OR viral transformation[tw] OR immortalization[tw] OR Telomer*[tw])
Alters cell proliferation, cell death & nutrient supply (KC 10)	AGENT NAME AND (Cell Proliferation[MH] OR DNA Replication[MH] OR Cell Cycle[MH] OR Hyperplasia[MH] OR Metaplasia[MH:NoExp] OR Neovascularization, Pathologic[MH:NoExp] OR Apoptosis[MH] OR Angiogenesis Modulating Agents[MH:NoExp] OR Angiogenesis Inducing Agents[MH] OR Heat-Shock Proteins[MH] OR Extracellular Matrix[MH:NoExp] OR Cell proliferation[tw] OR Cellular proliferation[tw] OR Cell multiplication[tw] OR Cell division[tw] OR Proliferative activity[tw] OR Sustained proliferation[tw] OR DNA replication[tw] OR DNA synthesis[tw] OR tumor growth[tw] OR neoplastic growth[tw] OR malignant growth[tw] OR Hyperplasia[tw] OR Metaplasia[tw] OR Apoptosis inhibition[tw] OR Angiogenesis[tw] OR heat shock protein[tw] OR extracellular matrix[tw])

#### Annex 4. Text mining for prioritizing agents for *IARC Monographs* evaluations

##### Text mining – search terms used

PubMed Filter Label	PubMed Filters	Additional filter for human studies*
Cancer all	(neoplasm*[All Fields] OR carcinogen*[All Fields] OR malignan*[All Fields] OR tumor[All Fields] OR tumors[All Fields] OR tumour[All Fields] OR tumours[All Fields] OR cancer[All Fields] OR cancers[All Fields])	
Cancer epidemiology	((neoplasm*[All Fields] OR carcinogen*[All Fields] OR malignan*[All Fields] OR tumor[All Fields] OR tumors[All Fields] OR tumour[All Fields] OR tumours[All Fields] OR cancer[All Fields] OR cancers[All Fields]) AND (cohort[All Fields] OR case*[All Fields] OR epidemiolog*[All Fields] OR Epidemiology[Mesh] OR "Epidemiologic Studies"[Mesh] OR "Occupational Exposure"[Mesh] OR workers[All Fields]))	
Causes DNA alterations (KC 1-3)	("Mutation"[Mesh] OR "Cytogenetic Analysis"[Mesh] OR "Mutagens"[Mesh] OR "Oncogenes"[Mesh] OR "Genetic Processes"[All Fields] OR "genomic instability"[Mesh] OR chromosom*[All Fields] OR clastogen*[All Fields] OR "genetic toxicology"[All Fields] OR "strand break"[All Fields] OR "unscheduled DNA synthesis"[All Fields] OR "DNA damage"[All Fields] OR "DNA adducts"[All Fields] OR "SCE"[All Fields] OR "chromatid"[All Fields] OR micronucle*[All Fields] OR mutagen*[All Fields] OR "DNA repair"[All Fields] OR "UDS"[All Fields] OR "DNA fragmentation"[All Fields] OR "DNA cleavage"[All Fields])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Induces epigenetic alterations (KC 4)	("rna"[MeSH] OR "epigenesis, genetic"[MeSH] OR rna OR "rna, messenger"[MeSH] OR "rna"[All Fields] OR "messenger rna"[All Fields] OR mrna[All Fields] OR "histones"[MeSH] OR histones[All Fields] OR epigenetic[All Fields] OR miRNA[All Fields] OR methylation[All Fields])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Induces oxidative stress (KC 5)	("reactive oxygen species"[MeSH Terms] OR "reactive oxygen species"[All Fields] OR "oxygen radicals"[All Fields] OR "oxidative stress"[MeSH Terms] OR "oxidative"[All Fields] OR "oxidative stress"[All Fields] OR "free radicals"[All Fields])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)

## Text mining – search terms used

PubMed Filter Label	PubMed Filters	Additional filter for human studies*
Induces chronic inflammation (KC 6)	((chronic[All Fields] AND "inflammation"[MeSH Terms]) OR (chronic inflamm*[All Fields]))	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Causes immunosuppression (KC 7)	(Immunosuppression[MH] OR "Killer Cells, Natural"[MH] OR "CD4-Positive T-Lymphocytes"[MH] OR immunosuppress*[tw] OR immune response*[tw] OR immune function*[tw] OR "immune status"[tw] OR "immune state*[tw] OR "immune competence"[tw] OR "immune impairment"[tw] OR "immune dysregulation"[tw] OR "humoral immunity"[tw] OR "cell-mediated immunity"[tw] OR NK[tw] OR "Natural Killer"[tw] OR CD4[tw] OR "T4 Cell*[tw] OR T4 Lymphocyte[tw])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Modulates receptor mediated effects (KC 8)	("Androgen Antagonists"[Mesh:NoExp] OR "Androgen Receptor Antagonists"[Mesh:NoExp] OR "Estrogen Antagonists"[MH] OR "Estrogen Receptor Modulators"[MH:NoExp] OR "Gonadal Hormones"[MH] OR "Thyroid Hormones"[MH] OR "Endocrine Disruptors"[MH] OR "Receptors, Steroid"[MH] OR "Receptors, Cytoplasmic and Nuclear"[MH] OR "Receptors, Aryl Hydrocarbon"[MH] OR Androgen*[tw] OR Estradiol[tw] OR Estrogen*[tw] OR Progesterone[tw] OR Testosterone[tw] OR thyroid[tw] OR "Endocrine disrupt*[tw] OR "Peroxisome Proliferator-Activated Receptor"[tw] OR PPAR[tw] OR "constitutive androstane receptor"[tw] OR "farnesoid X-activated receptor"[tw] OR "liver X receptor"[tw] OR "Retinoid X receptor"[tw] OR "Aryl hydrocarbon receptor"[tw] OR "Ah receptor"[tw])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Causes immortalization (KC 9)	("Cell Transformation, Neoplastic"[MH:NoExp] OR "Cell Transformation, Viral"[MH] OR Telomere[MH] OR "Telomere Shortening"[MH] OR "Telomere Homeostasis"[MH] OR "cell transformation"[tw] OR "tumorigen transformation"[tw] "tumorigenic transformation"[tw] OR "neoplastic transformation"[tw] OR "carcinogen transformation"[tw] OR "carcinogenic transformation"[tw] OR "viral transformation"[tw] OR immortalization[tw] OR Telomer*[tw])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)
Alters cell proliferation, cell death & nutrient supply (KC 10)	("Cell Proliferation"[MH] OR "DNA Replication"[MH] OR "Cell Cycle"[MH] OR Hyperplasia[MH] OR Metaplasia[MH:NoExp] OR "Neovascularization, Pathologic"[MH:NoExp] OR Apoptosis[MH] OR "Angiogenesis Modulating Agents"[MH:NoExp] OR "Angiogenesis Inducing Agents"[MH] OR "Heat-Shock Proteins"[MH] OR "Extracellular Matrix"[MH:NoExp] OR "Cell proliferation"[tw] OR "Cellular proliferation"[tw] OR "Cell multiplication"[tw] OR "Cell division"[tw] OR "Proliferative activity"[tw] OR "Sustained proliferation"[tw] OR "DNA replication"[tw])	(children OR girls OR girl OR men OR women OR boys OR boy OR participants OR participant OR individual OR individuals OR patients OR patient OR human OR "Homo Sapiens" OR subjects OR subject OR person OR persons OR farmers OR farmer OR people OR cases OR recruited OR enrolled)



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## Text mining – search terms used

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PubMed Filter Label	PubMed Filters	Additional filter for human studies*
	OR "DNA synthesis"[tw] OR "tumor growth"[tw] OR "neoplastic growth"[tw] OR "malignant growth"[tw] OR Hyperplasia[tw] OR Metaplasia[tw] OR "Apoptosis inhibition"[tw] OR Angiogenesis[tw] OR "heat shock protein"[tw] OR "extracellular matrix"[tw])	

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\*additional search terms used to identify studies in exposed humans.

Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities  
for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029

		All KC papers								
Unique agent name	Agent Class	All KCs (Unique of papers in KC1-10)*	(KC 1-3)	(KC 4)	(KC 5)	(KC 6)	(KC 7)	(KC 8)	(KC 9)	(KC 10)
Gene therapy/Cell therapy/Vectors	A: Biologicals_other	53663	34710	40758	5890	4278	177034	11617	1604	52161
Dysbiotic microbiota	A: Biologicals_other	16991	743	9501	1968	1472	4587	1227	22	970
Helicobacter pylori	A: Biologicals_other	10198	2381	2860	816	984	1793	193	92	4133
Fusobacterium nucleatum	A: Biologicals_other	662	129	280	85	48	162	6	2	141
Merkel cell polyomavirus	A: Biologicals_other	247	73	81	0	4	78	11	2	66
Schistosoma mansoni	A: Biologicals_parasites	2648	290	849	249	58	1261	90	5	359
Schistosoma japonicum	A: Biologicals_parasites	931	75	429	83	15	393	25	3	146
Opisthorchis felineus	A: Biologicals_parasites	253	40	84	37	43	66	8	1	74
Severe acute respiratory syndrome coronavirus	A: Biologicals_virus	23022	3054	16510	1140	627	12184	1012	52	849
Human cytomegalovirus (HCMV)	A: Biologicals_virus	9738	1718	2653	134	171	5157	151	88	1887
Human papilloma virus (beta and some gamma)	A: Biologicals_virus	2911	656	1318	62	28	740	70	134	907
Hepatitis D virus	A: Biologicals_virus	1468	221	1327	7	38	120	7	3	57
Salmonella typhi	A: Biologicals_virus	1355	525	224	81	11	522	25	0	176
Obesity	A: Complex_exposure	36093	5487	13355	6745	3935	2899	13504	263	5006
Insomnia / Sleep	A: Complex_exposure	23933	4129	7283	3757	1280	3403	5186	259	2844
Haloacetic acids and other disinfection byproducts	A: Complex_exposure	1836	422	579	638	8	44	241	5	376
Second hand smoke and active smoking	A: Complex_exposure	1715	500	477	524	100	189	147	18	304
Social isolation and loneliness	A: Complex_exposure	1034	97	402	74	36	136	291	15	122
Sedentary behaviour	A: Complex_exposure	636	28	155	233	77	66	146	25	66
Electronic nicotine delivery systems (ENDS)	A: Complex_exposure	548	112	125	297	17	36	21	1	87
Combustion of biomass	A: Complex_exposure	339	73	79	199	10	10	8	1	14
Chronic circadian dysfunction	A: Complex_exposure	199	44	57	25	5	28	68	4	15
Cannabis smoking	A: Complex_exposure	180	30	66	15	6	50	15	0	28
Night shift work	A: Complex_exposure	177	11	51	20	14	27	80	5	13
Long working days (> 12 hours per day)	A: Complex_exposure	98	6	31	12	12	28	33	3	8
2,4,6-Tribromophenol (disinfection byproduct)	A: Complex_exposure	47	10	15	15	0	0	17	0	5
Metalworking fluid	A: Complex_exposure	26	6	10	3	1	4	0	0	5
Anatase-type nano-TiO2 and other nanomaterials	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	39173	6436	17955	22570	678	6450	2077	381	24574
Ultrafine particles	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	12098	2615	3399	4844	688	1566	870	120	2051
Silica dust	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	11438	1602	3625	3372	264	834	583	76	3315
Outdoor air pollution	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	5232	1233	1484	1833	278	526	507	72	517
Multiwalled carbon nanotubes	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	3154	472	667	1350	43	194	168	31	887
Micro- and nano- plastics	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	1971	193	357	1424	18	149	174	0	161
Acrylonitrile-Butadiene-Styrene particles	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	1701	43	177	105	9	80	56	1	1339
Asbestos	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	1552	591	336	501	74	125	28	38	497
Nitrogen dioxide	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	917	122	187	473	27	78	42	10	106
Engineered stone	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	441	87	108	189	13	15	9	5	112
Carbon black, bulk and nanoscale	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	390	70	104	232	15	34	20	6	57
Coal dust	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	146	49	28	64	9	4	8	2	28
Taconite	A: Dusts_particles_fibres	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 1. Class of agents A: biologicals, complex exposures, dust particles and fibres**

Count of unique papers in PubMed across the KCs \*Note: When the paper count is > 10 000 for a KC, only the first 10 000 are used due to the limitation of PubMed APIs.

Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities  
for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029

Unique agent name	Agent Class	All KC papers								
		All KCs (Unique of papers in KC1- 10)*	(KC 1-3)	(KC 4)	(KC 5)	(KC 6)	(KC 7)	(KC 8)	(KC 9)	(KC 10)
Selenium and selenium compounds	B: Metals_metalloids	8039	923	2109	4006	114	760	1276	31	1514
Rare earth elements	B: Metals_metalloids	6052	788	1446	1740	101	345	501	20	2023
Metallic nickel	B: Metals_metalloids	4645	1291	1554	1412	42	401	163	58	880
Inorganic lead compounds	B: Metals_metalloids	4564	836	1363	1730	32	285	548	35	764
Dental amalgam	B: Metals_metalloids	197	33	41	52	35	35	35	0	37
Phosphorescent paints [e.g: strontium]	B: Metals_metalloids	1	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	1
Anthracyclines as mechanistic class	B: Pharmaceutical	28647	21524	7576	4737	85	2390	2593	187	14310
Daunorubicin (anthracycline)	B: Pharmaceutical	27506	20830	7101	4531	82	2243	2188	181	13863
Doxorubicin (anthracycline)	B: Pharmaceutical	26225	19100	6316	4345	74	1944	2099	164	12867
Assisted reproductive techniques (ART)	B: Pharmaceutical	22754	6930	4173	1393	47	704	12833	118	3777
Methotrexate	B: Pharmaceutical	16230	8107	1681	576	396	5270	1050	37	2580
Hormone replacement therapy	B: Pharmaceutical	11276	563	426	259	44	184	22101	31	1118
Progestogen-only contraceptives	B: Pharmaceutical	9498	214	593	63	13	110	9205	11	1035
Anaesthetics, volatile (isoflurane, sevoflurane)	B: Pharmaceutical	7723	238	6894	542	9	123	145	1	764
Anti-thymocyte globulin	B: Pharmaceutical	7624	901	185	10	10	6976	170	9	493
Reversible AChE inhibitors such as Rivastigmine	B: Pharmaceutical	3852	501	1834	991	31	298	287	7	388
Tetracycline	B: Pharmaceutical	3497	1289	1123	533	55	179	285	11	720
Paracetamol	B: Pharmaceutical	3416	480	850	1767	49	203	359	5	604
Clomiphene citrate	B: Pharmaceutical	2950	105	61	23	1	11	2814	0	161
Methamphetamine	B: Pharmaceutical	2511	193	1637	523	11	131	166	5	283
Epirubicin (anthracycline)	B: Pharmaceutical	2489	1832	259	122	3	91	362	11	481
Gadolinium based contrast agents	B: Pharmaceutical	1465	179	372	244	49	167	96	0	584
Platinum-based chemotherapies as mechanism of action	B: Pharmaceutical	1241	561	263	220	2	81	47	13	458
Melanoma Tx - Vemurafenib	B: Pharmaceutical	1015	715	188	33	3	55	94	4	352
Tofacitinib and other JAK kinase inhibitors	B: Pharmaceutical	833	105	152	31	123	433	35	13	122
Melanoma Tx - Dabrafenib	B: Pharmaceutical	493	392	50	7	3	25	70	3	95
Breast implants	B: Pharmaceutical	387	42	40	35	72	102	47	0	118
Carbadox	B: Pharmaceutical	176	176	33	2	0	4	3	0	6
Alefacept	B: Pharmaceutical	123	0	4	0	12	111	0	0	7
Melanoma Tx - Encorafenib	B: Pharmaceutical	92	85	7	0	0	1	0	0	11
GLP-1 analogues	B: Pharmaceutical	6	0	0	2	1	0	3	0	1
Neonatal phototherapy	B: Physical_agents	16022	1314	2337	6156	327	2629	442	45	6777
Extremely low frequency magnetic fields	B: Physical_agents	2566	564	481	599	20	145	238	15	1195
RF/EMF from wireless mobile radiation	B: Physical_agents	84	30	16	23	1	9	7	0	28
Very hot beverages and very hot food	B: Physical_agents	40	11	11	8	3	2	4	1	10
Intense pulsed light (IPL)	B: Physical_agents	28	3	5	4	10	4	2	0	8
Artificial light at night (ALAN)	B: Physical_agents	16	0	3	6	0	2	3	1	2
Radon-222 and its decay products	B: Physical_agents	2	2	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

**Table 2. Class of agents B: metals and metalloids, pharmaceuticals, physical agents**

Count of unique papers in PubMed across the KCs \*Note: When the paper count is > 10 000 for a KC, only the first 10 000 are used due to the limitation of PubMed APIs.

Report of the Advisory Group to Recommend Priorities  
for the *IARC Monographs* during 2025–2029

Unique agent name	Agent Class	All KC papers								
		All KCs (Unique of papers in KC1-10)*	(KC 1-3)	(KC 4)	(KC 5)	(KC 6)	(KC 7)	(KC 8)	(KC 9)	(KC 10)
Pyrethrins and pyrethroids	C: Chemical_pesticide	2699	929	997	655	10	134	364	5	328
Atrazine and other 2-chlor	C: Chemical_pesticide	1171	212	320	381	0	48	398	0	106
Chlorpyrifos	C: Chemical_pesticide	1169	198	520	421	3	50	156	2	167
Glyphosate	C: Chemical_pesticide	1163	321	510	346	1	35	150	3	136
Malathion	C: Chemical_pesticide	583	165	217	170	1	39	60	3	79
Cypermethrin (pyrethroid)	C: Chemical_pesticide	549	153	191	184	1	34	87	2	102
Permethrin (pyrethroid)	C: Chemical_pesticide	414	157	143	77	7	34	54	0	37
Biphenyl	C: Chemical_pesticide	371	64	167	74	1	5	47	1	75
Carbaryl	C: Chemical_pesticide	259	75	126	36	0	16	30	0	29
Vinclozolin	C: Chemical_pesticide	247	28	103	11	1	3	209	0	29
2,4-Dichlorophenol	C: Chemical_pesticide	210	63	49	90	0	3	31	0	10
Chlordecone	C: Chemical_pesticide	163	14	30	14	0	7	105	1	36
Mancozeb	C: Chemical_pesticide	149	44	23	59	0	8	39	0	34
Tebuconazole	C: Chemical_pesticide	139	45	48	40	0	3	37	0	14
1,2-Dibromo-3-chloroprop	C: Chemical_pesticide	121	80	14	8	0	0	39	0	8
Alachlor	C: Chemical_pesticide	119	40	38	33	0	2	21	1	23
Bifenthrin	C: Chemical_pesticide	108	18	46	37	0	4	33	0	15
para-Dichlorobenzene	C: Chemical_pesticide	56	25	8	11	0	0	7	0	17
Pendimethalin	C: Chemical_pesticide	52	20	10	24	1	3	6	0	14
Boscalid	C: Chemical_pesticide	48	19	20	14	0	1	4	0	1
Ethylendithiocarbamates	C: Chemical_pesticide	47	11	19	5	0	3	11	0	10
Cyfluthrin	C: Chemical_pesticide	44	10	18	16	0	1	3	0	4
Neonicotinoid insecticides	C: Chemical_pesticide	44	9	21	15	0	1	3	0	3
Phosmet	C: Chemical_pesticide	30	9	18	5	0	0	2	0	2
Ametryn	C: Chemical_pesticide	25	9	3	15	0	0	1	0	0
Hexythiazox	C: Chemical_pesticide	13	2	13	1	0	0	0	0	2
Terbufos	C: Chemical_pesticide	11	5	5	3	0	0	0	0	2
Fonofos	C: Chemical_pesticide	7	2	3	2	0	0	1	0	0
Proquinazid	C: Chemical_pesticide	2	0	1	0	0	1	0	0	0
Methyltetraprole	C: Chemical_pesticide	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Estragole	C: Nutritional	108	62	54	11	1	1	6	0	13
Sucralose	C: Nutritional	63	12	20	20	1	3	4	0	14
Sweetened beverage cons	C: Nutritional	23	2	9	6	3	1	4	1	3
Ultra-processed food cons	C: Nutritional	13	0	2	7	2	1	1	0	0
Semi-conductor industry	C: Occupations	632	109	217	192	3	23	32	5	105
Textile manufacturing indu	C: Occupations	368	100	84	171	5	13	19	0	11
E-waste workers	C: Occupations	209	38	61	85	1	15	40	5	5
Laboratory work & occupa	C: Occupations	133	41	33	2	2	31	20	0	10
Occupation as a pesticide	C: Occupations	68	26	20	10	0	3	20	2	5

**Table 3. Class of agents C: pesticides, nutritional, occupations**

Count of unique papers in PubMed across the KCs \*Note: When the paper count is > 10 000 for a KC, only the first 10 000 are used due to the limitation of PubMed APIs.

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Unique agent name	Agent Class	All KC papers								
		All KCs (Unique of papers in KC1- 10)*	(KC 1-3)	(KC 4)	(KC 5)	(KC 6)	(KC 7)	(KC 8)	(KC 9)	(KC 10)
Hair straightening products	D: Chemical_dye	489	180	66	192	7	24	82	0	40
Congo red	D: Chemical_dye	447	172	141	72	12	17	24	1	87
Hair colouring products (personal use)	D: Chemical_dye	325	151	34	158	1	13	23	0	31
Tattoos and permanent make up	D: Chemical_dye	200	17	37	19	20	48	13	0	55
para-Phenylenediamine (1,4-benzenediamine)	D: Chemical_dye	198	67	45	94	0	22	6	0	33
2,4-Diaminotoluene	D: Chemical_dye	134	134	11	5	0	1	4	0	10
Red dye no. 3 (Erythrosine)	D: Chemical_dye	84	26	14	26	0	4	16	0	19
3,3'-Dimethoxybenzidine (ortho-Dianiline)	D: Chemical_dye	80	19	10	52	1	0	5	0	2
Methyl anthranilate	D: Chemical_dye	67	3	67	2	0	0	1	0	2
o-Aminoazotoluene	D: Chemical_dye	45	18	20	0	0	3	6	0	13
p-Nitrotoluene	D: Chemical_dye	25	12	8	3	0	1	3	0	4
3,3'-Dimethylbenzidine (ortho-Tolidine)	D: Chemical_dye	14	11	2	3	0	0	2	0	0
para-Cresidine (2-Methoxy-5-methylphenylamine)	D: Chemical_dye	12	8	1	0	0	1	0	0	5
Ethyl anthranilate	D: Chemical_dye	2	1	1	0	0	0	0	0	0
Methyl anthranilate	D: Chemical_dye	2	0	0	2	0	0	0	0	0
5-Nitro-ortho-toluidine	D: Chemical_dye	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Bisphenol A	D: Chemical_POPs	5878	389	1236	954	15	142	4934	20	812
Phthalates (e.g., DEHP)	D: Chemical_POPs	2650	349	768	612	11	95	1622	8	558
Dibutyl phthalate	D: Chemical_POPs	801	96	213	183	2	25	492	0	140
Perfluorooctanesulfonic acid (PFOS)	D: Chemical_POPs	696	59	187	179	2	64	314	15	138
Bisphenol S and Bisphenol F	D: Chemical_POPs	389	27	94	99	1	13	299	1	66
Pentabromodiphenyl ethers	D: Chemical_POPs	382	42	108	113	0	17	202	2	60
Butyl benzyl phthalate	D: Chemical_POPs	164	21	48	19	1	5	121	2	35
Diisononyl phthalate	D: Chemical_POPs	88	7	19	23	0	8	51	0	13
Hexafluoropropylene Oxide (HFPO)	D: Chemical_POPs	87	5	40	23	1	5	36	3	14
Chlorinated paraffins	D: Chemical_POPs	55	9	11	15	0	1	32	0	8
Perfluorohexanesulfonic acid (PFHxS)	D: Chemical_POPs	44	4	13	8	0	3	24	2	3
Tris(chloropropyl)phosphate	D: Chemical_POPs	12	3	6	7	1	0	1	0	2
Methanol	D: Chemical_solvent	4895	783	2731	1081	38	104	287	5	561
Carbon tetrachloride	D: Chemical_solvent	4034	362	1352	1837	96	184	298	16	1286
Gasoline oxygenated additives (MTBE)	D: Chemical_solvent	2974	252	1625	1291	26	57	97	9	251
Automotive gasoline	D: Chemical_solvent	906	227	532	203	2	17	31	0	51
Xylenes	D: Chemical_solvent	895	215	446	186	22	39	39	4	96
Isoprene	D: Chemical_solvent	354	78	205	124	0	2	2	0	15
Tetrachloroethylene (perchloroethylene)	D: Chemical_solvent	240	76	109	59	0	11	7	0	19
p-Cresol	D: Chemical_solvent	203	48	90	59	6	6	11	0	35
Allyl alcohol	D: Chemical_solvent	161	30	56	59	1	1	6	0	24
Cumene	D: Chemical_solvent	40	10	14	24	0	1	4	0	1
Sulfolane	D: Chemical_solvent	14	4	6	3	0	0	0	0	1

**Table 4. Class of agents D: dyes, POPs, solvents**

Count of unique papers in PubMed across the KCs \*Note: When the paper count is > 10 000 for a KC, only the first 10 000 are used due to the limitation of PubMed APIs.

POP, persistent organic pollutant

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		All KC papers								
Unique agent name	Agent Class	All KCs (Unique of papers in KC1-10)*	(KC 1-3)	(KC 4)	(KC 5)	(KC 6)	(KC 7)	(KC 8)	(KC 9)	(KC 10)
Toxoplasma gondii	E: Biol_natural_toxins	4063	610	1075	232	63	2060	81	9	831
Aflatoxins	E: Biol_natural_toxins	3514	1878	1091	666	18	274	203	31	575
Zearalenone	E: Biol_natural_toxins	1400	187	308	265	8	73	942	2	332
Patulin	E: Biol_natural_toxins	883	883	67	76	0	14	10	0	59
Fumonisin B1	E: Biol_natural_toxins	549	139	139	150	1	37	26	2	293
Safrole	E: Biol_natural_toxins	259	121	90	48	1	8	30	0	45
Alpha pinene	E: Biol_natural_toxins	176	23	74	78	0	3	3	0	38
Pyrrolizidine alkaloids	E: Biol_natural_toxins	27	24	4	1	0	0	0	0	3
Black cohosh extract	E: Biol_natural_toxins	2	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	0
Nitrite-producing bacteria	E: Biol_natural_toxins	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Glutathione	E: Chemical_other	25556	6289	6899	30718	322	1136	1815	61	7590
Nitrate in drinking water	E: Chemical_other	8753	1857	3155	3573	141	285	578	7	1090
Formaldehyde	E: Chemical_other	5987	1829	2782	745	148	434	410	25	849
Ozone	E: Chemical_other	4341	490	840	2857	90	219	254	16	418
Palmitic acid	E: Chemical_other	2586	482	1079	701	53	94	341	3	796
Acetaldehyde	E: Chemical_other	1834	629	594	633	12	82	86	4	289
Parabens (cosmetics)	E: Chemical_other	1409	157	766	194	0	22	591	1	101
Acrylamide	E: Chemical_other	1095	448	254	391	0	18	101	9	233
Triclosan	E: Chemical_other	1037	141	372	215	5	33	441	3	92
Thioacetamide	E: Chemical_other	894	86	343	339	25	26	61	8	354
1,2-Dihydroxybenzene	E: Chemical_other	755	315	183	279	3	15	50	0	108
Ethylene oxide	E: Chemical_other	636	382	141	103	3	12	14	0	79
Nitrilotriacetic acid	E: Chemical_other	595	462	87	301	1	8	15	3	112
Cumyl hydroperoxide	E: Chemical_other	499	109	64	445	0	1	23	0	40
Bromate compounds	E: Chemical_other	387	146	51	287	5	7	28	1	59
2,3-Butanedione (diacetyl)	E: Chemical_other	280	92	106	59	2	3	9	1	60
Carbon disulfide	E: Chemical_other	213	43	78	51	1	8	38	1	17
1,4-dioxane	E: Chemical_other	184	54	65	63	0	2	5	1	21
Piperonyl butoxide	E: Chemical_other	184	42	74	66	1	5	19	1	26
Fluoranthene	E: Chemical_other	166	75	46	44	1	5	19	0	19
Glycidamide	E: Chemical_other	112	86	15	24	0	0	9	1	16
Polyhexamethyleneamine	E: Chemical_other	40	4	15	9	2	5	0	0	18
Butyraldehyde	E: Chemical_other	24	9	13	7	0	0	2	0	2
1,2-CYCLOHEXANEDICARBONIC ACID	E: Chemical_other	15	2	1	6	0	0	9	0	1
2,4-Dimethylphenol	E: Chemical_other	11	3	5	2	0	0	0	0	2
Atracuric acid (Methylglucuronide)	E: Chemical_other	9	1	4	0	0	0	8	0	5
Benzophenone-1	E: Chemical_other	9	1	4	1	0	0	5	0	2

**Table 5. Class of agents E: biotoxins and other chemicals**

Count of unique papers in PubMed across the KCs \*Note: When the paper count is > 10 000 for a KC, only the first 10 000 are used due to the limitation of PubMed APIs.