

Landmark health study to be made in India

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U.S. scientists are starting a landmark genetic study to determine the linkage between lead exposure and children's intellectual development in India.

Harvard University and University of Michigan researchers are joining scientists from BioServe Biotechnologies Ltd. in Laurel, Md., in performing DNA genotyping on tissue samples collected from 750 school children, who had been exposed to lead pollutants, in the Indian city of Madras, which is also known as Chennai.

Although it's well known that high lead levels in the body can negatively affect intelligence, this will be the first study in India to measure that effect.

"This study represents a cutting edge research collaboration that will gain insights into a global environmental health problem," said Dr. Howard Hu, chairman of the Department of Environmental Health Sciences at the University of Michigan's School of Public Health and adjunct professor at the Harvard School of Public Health. Hu will serve as the project's principle investigator.

Results from the study, which might serve as a model for future investigations into the relationship of genetics with other environmental hazards and diseases, are expected in about a year.

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