

The reviewed paper presents results of a very interesting study on human exposure to mercury near an integrated steel plant in India. Mercury has been recognized as a very important contaminant having adverse impacts on the environment and humans. Human health problems due to mercury contamination of the environment are documented in certain parts of the world, mostly due to mercury releases from chlor-alkali plants, and more recently from coal-fired power plants. However, global, regional, and even local emission inventories of mercury emissions indicate that combustion of coal in other industries can be a very important source of human health problems. One should add, however, that direct observations of exposure levels of mercury around the industries, such as iron and steel production are largely missing in the literature. Therefore, the reviewed paper is a very important contribution to our knowledge on exposure and exposure pathways of mercury to humans in the area of integrated steel plants. This information is missing not only in India or Asia but also in other regions of the world. The importance of having this knowledge can be related to a recently agreed UNEP convention on mercury emission and exposure reduction on a global scale.

The paper is written with a clear goal and objectives. Sampling and analytical methodology employed in the reviewed study is adequate and so is the concept of discussion of obtained results. Perhaps the authors may wish to add a separate chapter on Conclusions on the basis of information presented in the section on Results and discussion. This addition will improve a transparency of major outcome from the presented study.

In summary, I am pleased to recommend the reviewed paper for publication.