One century ago, Turner, an Australian physician, wrote, “Prevention is easy. Paint containing lead should never be employed where children play”. Still, many countries allowed the use of lead in paints, plumbing, gasoline, and other consumer products. After a mid-century peak, blood lead levels declined, but low-level exposures have been shown to elevate children’s risk for intellectual deficits, school failure, delinquency and ADHD. In adults, lead is a risk factor for heart disease, miscarriage and violent behaviors. After reviewing the impact of lead toxicity, we will discuss steps necessary to prevent lead exposure.

Bruce Lanphear, MD, MPH, is a Senior Scientist at the Child & Family Research Institute, BC Children’s Hospital and Professor, Faculty of Health Sciences at Simon Fraser University in Vancouver, British Columbia. The goal of his research is to prevent common diseases and disabilities in children, such as asthma, injuries and ADHD. Initially, his research seeks to quantify the impact of heavy metals and chemicals on diseases in children using novel biomarkers measured in meconium, serum, urine or blood during pregnancy and childhood. Dr. Lanphear also designs trials to test the benefits of reducing children’s exposures to environmental hazards.