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FEATURES POLLUTION

Microplastic pollution 'number one threat' to humankind

20th February 2019 Thomas Barrett

Microplastic pollution may be having a profound impact on people's hormones, affecting blood pressure, fertility, immune systems and causing multiple diseases including cancer.

The public has become more aware of the damage caused when plastic is dumped in the world's oceans, especially when it breaks down into microplastic particles, and a new report called 'The Global Plastic Calamity', commissioned by sustainable water company Bluewater, highlights how these microplastics release thousands of hormone-disrupting chemicals.

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There are more than 85,000 manufactured chemicals, of which thousands are Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals (EDCs) and phthalates found in plastics and other consumer products which end up in the sea.

Dr. Ivone Mirpuri, a leading hormone specialist, says that through her research and observations, chemicals in plastic have triggered rising levels of abnormal development and illnesses over the past five decades, ranging from stunted fertility and male/female sex malformations to obesity, diabetes, cancer, heart attacks and cognitive, behavioural and other brain-related problems such as Attention Deficit Hyperactivity (ADH).

'There is now solid scientific evidence that so-called endocrine disrupting chemicals, or EDC's, now commonplace in the natural environment as a result of plastic pollution, are blocking the natural function of hormones,' she said.

Dr. Mirpuri described EDC's as the 'No1 threat' to humankind and she believes that humankind could be wiped out within 200 years unless urgent action is taken to reduce plastic pollution.

Earlier this month it was revealed that microplastics have been found in the guts of every marine mammal washed up on Britain's shores.

Researchers from the University of Exeter and Plymouth Marine Laboratory (PML) examined 50 animals from 10 species of dolphins, seals and whales, and found microplastics (less than 5mm) in them all.

Most of the particles (84%) were synthetic, with a report by the Instutition of Mechanical Engineers published last year revealing that 35% of microplastics released into the world's oceans come from synthetic textiles.