

Got Mercury?



A Project of Turtle Island Restoration Network

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Request for Proposal

1. Purpose and Description of Services

GotMercury, a project of the non-profit organization Turtle Island Restoration Network (TIRN), is seeking a qualified laboratory to conduct mercury hair testing and analyze data collected for our Children's Mercury Testing (CMT) project to determine the impact of fish consumption on children's mercury levels.

A. Background

GotMercury was established as a project of the non-profit 501(c)3 organization TIRN in 2002. GotMercury's mission is to educate the public about the health risks of mercury in seafood and to take action to reduce the public's exposure to mercury. GotMercury publishes a free mercury-in-fish calculator for people to estimate their mercury exposure, based on current U. S. EPA and FDA guidelines. You can access the calculator for free online at www.gotmercury.org or at gotmercury.mobi for cell phone browsers. In addition we educate the public by working with grocery stores and restaurants to display the federal advisory that warns consumers about the mercury risks in seafood and have released numerous reports on our testing of fish samples for mercury levels. GotMercury also works to improve government policy on regulating and warning consumers about mercury in seafood. GotMercury is looking to expand our project through offering mercury hair testing to the public, with a particular focus on testing children.

Methylmercury found in seafood is a potent neurotoxin that can cause many serious health effects ranging from hair loss and nausea to central nervous system damage such as memory loss, speech impairment, numbness in the extremities and seizures. The consumption of seafood is the primary source of mercury exposure to people in the United States. Children are especially vulnerable to the impacts of mercury. According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), one in six (around 630,000) American children are born with potentially unsafe levels of mercury in their blood every year. There has been extensive research showing the detrimental effects of prenatal mercury exposure through the mother's fish consumption patterns on a child's development. However, little if any research has focused on the effect of post-natal fish consumption on children's mercury levels or development. Through our CMT project we want to examine the impact of fish consumption patterns on children's mercury levels to influence mercury in seafood policy

development and provide information to parents on how to make healthy seafood choices for their children.

B. Scope of Work

GotMercury seeks the ongoing services of a laboratory to conduct hair mercury testing and data analysis on the samples we provide. The analysis will also assess the relationship between the mercury levels in the samples and fish consumption of the testing participants responses to standardized questionnaires. The work is planned to commence no later than January 1, 2010, and continue for on year or longer depending on results. The immediate goal is to achieve and analyze 400 unique samples in a three-month period; followed by a report within 60 days of results if findings are significant.

The laboratory will be asked to:

- a. Develop with GotMercury mercury hair test kits that contain the following (GotMercury already has samples of these documents developed):
 - Cover letter;
 - Fact sheet on the CMT project and mercury in seafood;
 - Mercury testing questionnaire ;
 - Instruction for mercury hair testing kit;
 - Consent forms to be a research participant;
 - Materials needed to provide hair sample;
 - Other documents that may be required by laboratory.
- b. Send out and provide mercury hair test kits to:
 - Individual participants that have ordered test kits through GotMercury;
 - GotMercury for hair testing groups/events they have organized.
- c. Analyze data received from hair test kits including:
 - Percentage of results above EPA Reference Dose;
 - Correlation of mercury hair levels to fish consumption based on questionnaire information.
- d. Provide results from mercury hair tests:
 - Send out results to individual participant which include a follow-up letter from GotMercury;
 - Provide generic results and data analysis to GotMercury to be used in a report;
 - Provide narrative summarizing results.

C. Rates, Schedule and Reporting

The laboratory will provide the mercury hair test kits and analysis at a rate negotiated with GotMercury. A non-profit rate below market rates for the tests is highly preferred in order to conduct the testing. Partnering with the laboratory for in-kind donations or grants or other mechanisms for making costs as low as possible will be essential. The previous lab provided the mercury hair tests at cost as part of a research grant at \$20 per test. GotMercury provided administrative support by processing orders and forwarding participant information and payment to the laboratory, and providing copies of

GotMercury specific documents to be included in test kits. The laboratory will send out hair test kits and provide results within a timeframe agreed upon with GotMercury.

D. Minimum Qualifications and Certifications for Laboratory

The laboratory is required to have the following minimum qualifications and/or certifications:

- a. Clinical Laboratory Improvement Amendments (CLIA) certification or if not are willing to become certified;
- b. Experience with conducting mercury hair testing or testing for other toxins in humans;
- c. Affiliation with a research university or other nonprofit-facility is preferred but not necessarily required;
- d. Experience partnering with non-profit organizations.

E. Timeline

GotMercury requires a final agreement to be developed with a laboratory and mercury hair testing to begin by January 1, 2010 or before.

2. Further Information

For further questions and to receive additional materials regarding the project, scope of work or other issues please contact **Karen Steele** at karen@tirn.net or on **415-663-8590, ext. 109**. Also view the Got Mercury website at www.gotmercury.org.

3. Respond to the EFP

To respond to this RFP, please send a letter of interest summarizing how the laboratory will meet the criteria above; specifically including an estimate of hair testing per kit and experience working with non-profit organizations if applicable.

Send a maximum of 5 pages of information by email to Karen Steele, GotMercury, above; or by mail to GotMercury-Lab RFP, P. O. Box 370, Forest Knolls, CA 94933.