



Swiss air becoming cleaner

Switzerland, 26 March 2009. - The general improvement in air quality during the 1990's in Switzerland appears to have had beneficial effects on the respiratory health of adults. This is documented by new results from the **SAPALDIA study (Swiss Cohort Study on Air Pollution and Lung Diseases in Adults)** which have just been published in the renowned "American Journal of Respiratory and Critical Care Medicine". The SAPALDIA researchers, among them Nino Künzli, researcher from CREAL and IMIM, compared average PM10-levels at subjects' homes and respiratory symptoms in the years 1991 and 2002 among 7000 study participants. On average, PM10-levels decreased by **6.2 micrograms per m³** during this period.

Although subjects reported respiratory symptoms slightly more often in 2002 than in 1991, the increase was lower than expected based on the fact that subjects were 11 years older at the second examination. The authors estimate that **250 out of 10'000 subjects** in the age range of 30 to 70 years were spared of suffering from regular cough as a result of the decrease in ambient particle levels. The corresponding number for symptoms of chronic bronchitis was **180 out 10'000 subjects**. A beneficial effect was also observed for wheezing with breathing problems.

In 2007, the SAPALDIA researchers had shown that the same improvements in air quality had had a favorable influence on age-related decline in lung function (S. Downs et al., New England Journal of Medicine, 2007). The new results are essentially independent of these previous findings, adding to the evidence that efforts to reduce air pollution are well justified by the resulting benefits on human health.