Madrid Declaration

For the recognition of Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) within the ICD-11 classification of diseases

Public declaration on the need to include Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) in the International Classification of Diseases, ICD-11

Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) is a chronic condition characterized by the reproducible onset of multi-system symptoms following exposure to low levels of common chemicals in the environment—such as solvents, pesticides, cleaning products, fragrances, air pollutants, or building materials. These exposures are tolerated by most of the general population, yet in affected individuals they trigger a measurable symptomatic response and clearly define a distinct diagnostic syndrome.

Despite the accumulated clinical evidence, the growing body of scientific literature, and the recognition of MCS by various healthcare systems and national legal frameworks, this condition is not explicitly and adequately represented in the World Health Organization's International Classification of Diseases, 11th Revision (ICD-11). This omission has direct and serious consequences for people living with MCS.

Consequences of non-inclusion in ICD-11

The absence of a specific diagnostic code for MCS in ICD-11:

- Hinders official medical recognition and consistent diagnosis.
- Limits access to appropriate healthcare, environmental accommodations, and individualized treatments.
- Obstructs legal and administrative recognition of the condition, including disability determinations, sick leave, and social benefits.
- Prevents proper epidemiological surveillance, as well as the development of internationally comparable clinical and public-health research.
- Fosters stigma, trivialization of suffering, and the erroneous interpretation of the condition as exclusively psychological, contrary to current scientific evidence.

Scientific and clinical basis

MCS is a physical illness and is not attributable to psychological causes. It shows clinical and pathophysiological overlaps with other entities already recognized, such as central sensitization syndromes, myalgic encephalomyelitis/chronic fatigue syndrome, or fibromyalgia. Scientific studies describe alterations in key systems—neurological, immunological, endocrine, and detoxification pathways—as well as mechanisms of central and peripheral hypersensitization induced by environmental exposures.

The precautionary principle, evidence-informed clinical practice, and a human-rights-based approach require that this emerging health reality be acknowledged.

Call to international health authorities

For all the reasons set out above, the undersigned formally urge the World Health Organization and the committees responsible for ICD-11 to:

1. Include Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS) as a distinct clinical entity, with a specific diagnostic code.
2. Ensure a clear definition based on clinical and scientific criteria that prevents reductive or stigmatizing interpretations.
3. Enable international diagnostic harmonization, epidemiological research, and the development of environmental prevention policies.
4. Recognize the functional, social, and healthcare impact of MCS on millions of people worldwide.

Conclusion

The inclusion of MCS in ICD-11 is not merely a technical or classificatory matter: it is a public-health, scientific, and ethical necessity. Recognizing this condition is an essential step to guarantee the right to health, dignity, and appropriate care for affected individuals. As researchers and clinicians with experience in the study, assessment, diagnosis and/or care of adults and children with chemical sensitivity disorders, we support the stated objective of recognizing MCS as an independent condition within the World Health Organization’s International Classification of Diseases, ICD-11.