Marine mammals as bioindicators of persistent toxic substance (PTS) contamination in Russian Subarctic marine ecosystems

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PICES 2012 Annual Meeting
Hiroshima, Japan
Marine mammals are the top of the food web, and thus accumulate in their organs various toxic substances. Persistent organic pesticides deposit in the adipose tissue, as they are lipophilic xenobiotics.
Objective: determine the levels of persistent organochlorine pesticides in the organs of the Gray Whale and Pacific Walrus from the Bering Sea
They were caught by Chukotka natives in the summer of 2010-2011. The International Whaling Commission (IWC) has allowed exclusive harvesting rights for these Chukchi-Californian grey whales to the indigenous peoples of Chukotka and Alaska as a means of supporting their traditional lifestyles.
Methods for the pesticides analysis

Lipid extraction with hexane $C_6H_{14}$

Destruction of lipid by $H_2SO_4$

Gas chromatography with ECD
Results. Gray whale

The range of concentrations of POPs (DDTs + HCHs) in organs

Total concentration of POPs (DDTs + HCHs) in organs

- muscles
- liver
Age-dependent accumulation of POPs in the organs of male and female gray whale

**Liver**

**Muscles**

**Male**

**Female**

- ng/g lipid
- Age

Graphs showing the accumulation of POPs in liver and muscles of male and female gray whales with increasing age.
Results. Pacific warlus

The range of concentrations of POPs (DDTs + HCHs) in organs

Total concentration of POPs (DDTs + HCHs) in organs
The range of total concentration of POPs in organs in analyzed marine mammals

Gray whale

Pacific warlus

muscles

liver

ng/g lipid
The total concentration of POPs in marine mammals from different areas of World Ocean and analyzed species from the Bering Sea

1 - Striped dolphin (Japan), 2 - Black killer whale (Hawaiian Islands), 3 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2006), 4 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2007), 5 - Finless porpoises (Korea), 6 - Dugong (Australia), 7 - Finless porpoises (Black sea), 8 - Dolphin (Black sea), 9 - Sea lion (California, San Francisco), 10 – Elephant seal (California), 11 - Harbor seals (California), 12 - Sea lion (California, Monterey), 13 - Harbor seals (California, San Francisco), 14 - Harbor seals (Atlantic ocean), 15 - Common seal (Sea of Japan, Russia), 16 - Grey whale (the Bering sea, Russia), 17 – Pacific walrus (the Bering Sea, Russia)
The total concentration of DDTs in marine mammals from different areas of World Ocean and analyzed species from the Bering Sea

1 - Striped dolphin (Japan), 2 - Black killer whale (Hawaiian Islands), 3 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2006), 4 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2007), 5 - Finless porpoises (Korea), 6 - Dugong (Australia), 7 - Finless porpoises (Black sea), 8 - Dolphin (Black sea), 9 - Sea lion (California, San Francisco), 10 – Elephant seal (California), 11 - Harbor seals (California), 12 - Sea lion (California, Monterey), 13 - Harbor seals (California, San Francisco), 14 - Harbor seals (Atlantic ocean), 15 - Common seal (Sea of Japan, Russia), 16 - Grey whale (the Bering sea, Russia), 17 – Pacific walrus (the Bering Sea, Russia)
The total concentration of HCHs in marine mammals from different areas of World Ocean and analyzed species from the Bering Sea

1 - Striped dolphin (Japan), 2 - Black killer whale (Hawaiian Islands), 3 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2006), 4 - Killer whale (California-Alaska. 2007), 5 - Finless porpoises (Korea), 6 - Dugong (Australia), 7 - Finless porpoises (Black sea), 8 - Dolphin (Black sea), 9 - Sea lion (California, San Francisco), 10 – Elephant seal (California), 11 - Harbor seals (California), 12 - Sea lion (California, Monterey), 13 - Harbor seals (California, San Francisco), 14 - Harbor seals (Atlantic ocean), 15 - Common seal (Sea of Japan, Russia), 16 - Grey whale (the Bering sea, Russia), 17 – Pacific walrus (the Bering Sea, Russia)
Small benthic organisms

Octopus

Fish

Small benthic organisms
As there is no local pollution, transboundary atmospheric transfer, cool condensations and ocean currents from industrial regions of the western coast of North America can be possible sources of pesticides in the marine environment of the Bering Sea.
Conclusion

1. Gray whales of the Chukchi-Californian population and the Pacific walruses of the Bering Sea, as well as organisms of other areas of the World Ocean, accumulate persistent organochlorines in the bodies.

2. The total content of POPs in the gray whales and Pacific walruses confirms the accumulation of lipophilic xenobiotics in marine ecosystems in organisms of higher trophic levels.

3. In the bodies of mammals the amount of isomers of HCH prevails over the amount of DDT and its metabolites.

4. Higher concentrations of POPs are observed in large adults compared to younger individuals smaller in size, reflecting the accumulation of pesticides with the age.

5. Accumulation of POPs is more active in the liver than in the muscles.

6. The total average concentration of POPs in the bodies of the gray whale and Pacific walrus is lower than that of other marine mammals from the urbanized coast of the World Ocean. With the absence of local sources of pesticides in the Russian part of the Bering Sea possible factors of pesticide accumulation are atmospheric transfer, cold concentration and oceanic currents.
Thank you!!!