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NETs: a new biomarker of traffic-related air pollution exposure: are they ready to catch fish?

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Air pollution has been with humankind throughout evolution (*e.g.* volcanoes, forest fires), but it rapidly accelerated with the industrial revolution. Although the history of London's suffocating fogs began in the 18th century with coal power, it was the acute London fog episode of December 1952, and similar crises, that galvanised public health officials to begin to address the problem. The tremendous growth of automobiles reliant on internal combustion engines during the latter half of the 20th century ultimately led to current concerns with traffic-related air pollution (TRAP), causing researchers to seek a better understanding of air pollution health effects [1, 2]. The importance of this for public heath became key when the Harvard Six Cities Study and others demonstrated that particulate matter air pollution, not visible to the naked eye and producing minimal acute signs or symptoms, was strongly associated with mortality and serious morbidity [3–5]. To explain and support these epidemiological findings, more sophisticated human toxicology studies became essential for the mechanistic research that could provide stronger evidence of a causal association [6]. In this regard, early human controlled exposure studies with pollutant gases, primarily ozone and sulfur dioxide, provided some clues on how air pollutants caused morbidity and mortality [7–9].