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Global atmospheric transport and source-receptor relationships for arsenic

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ABSTRACT: Arsenic and many of its compounds are toxic pollutants in the global environment. They can be transported long distances in the atmosphere before depositing to the surface, but the global source-receptor relationships between various regions have not yet been assessed. We develop the first global model for atmospheric arsenic to better understand and quantify its inter-continental transport. Our model reproduces the observed arsenic concentrations in surface air over various sites around the world. Arsenic emissions from Asia and South America are found to be the dominant sources for atmospheric arsenic in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, respectively. Asian emissions are found to contribute 39% and 38% of the total arsenic deposition over the Arctic and Northern America, respectively. Another 14% of the arsenic deposition to the Arctic region is attributed to European emissions. Our results indicate that the reduction of anthropogenic arsenic emissions in Asia and South America can significantly reduce arsenic pollution not only locally but also globally.

INTRODUCTION

Arsenic is a ubiquitous metalloid in the global environment. Elemental arsenic and many of its compounds have high toxicity and have been listed by the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) as Group 1 carcinogens[1]. There have been many studies showing increased lung cancer risk for people living or working near arsenic-emitting industrial plants such as smelting facilities[2-6]. They, even at relatively low exposure levels, can also cause many other adverse health effects related to the brain and nervous system, digestive system, and skin[7-9].

There have been increasing concerns about arsenic pollution in the environment. In 2012, Consumer Reports[10] conducted tests on more than 200 samples of rice products in the United States and found that many of them (including some organic products and infant rice cereals) contain arsenic at "worrisome levels". Since 2013, the European Union Directive has set the standard for arsenic concentration in ambient air, which is 6 ng m^{-3} for annual mean concentrations. Besides direct inhalation, the arsenic concentration in ambient air can also affect the human exposure to arsenic through atmospheric deposition, which can enhance the arsenic levels in food (through arsenic uptake by crops/vegetation) or drinking water. Direct atmospheric deposition of arsenic was found to be the dominant transport pathway for arsenic from a factory to the leafy vegetables grown nearby, while arsenic in the root crops originated from both the soil and the atmosphere[11]. Therefore, the atmospheric concentrations and deposition of arsenic needs to be accounted for to fully understand and evaluate the human exposure risk to arsenic in the environment[12, 13].

There are large spatial variations for the atmospheric concentrations of arsenic, which can vary by several orders of magnitudes from less than 0.1 ng m^{-3} in remote sites to more than 10 ng m^{-3} in urban/industrial areas, presumably reflecting the impacts from anthropogenic activities. The arsenic concentrations were reported to be less than 41 pg m^{-3} in the south polar atmosphere[14]. In China and Chile, the dominant arsenic source regions in the Northern and Southern Hemispheres, respectively, the arsenic concentrations were found to reach 15 ng m^{-3} or higher[15, 16]. The typical residence time of arsenic in the atmosphere is several days[17-19], making it capable of long-range transport. This implies that arsenic emissions from one region can significantly affect other regions downwind. However, the global source-receptor relationship between

various regions has not been quantified so far, in contrast to the extensively studied source-receptor relationship for other anthropogenic pollutants and dust[20].

There have been some studies on the regional atmospheric transport of arsenic. Pacyna et al.[21] and Akeredolu et al.[22] investigated the long-range transport of arsenic and other heavy metals from Europe to Norway and the Arctic region, respectively. Gidhagen et al.[16] studied the regional effects from smelter emissions of arsenic in Chile. Based on the significant arsenic enrichment in snowpack samples from the Antarctic Plateau, Hong et al.[23] proposed that the emissions of trace elements (including arsenic) from nonferrous metal smelting and fossil fuel combustion processes in South America, especially in Chile, are the most likely sources.

There are both anthropogenic and natural sources for atmospheric arsenic. Metal (copper, zinc, and lead) smelting and coal combustion are the major anthropogenic arsenic sources[24-26], with copper smelting being the most important single source[19, 25, 26]. Additional minor anthropogenic sources include application of herbicide, wood preservation, and waste incineration[26]. Natural sources for arsenic in the atmosphere include volcanic emissions, wind erosion of soil, and biological activities, with volcanic emissions being the most important source[19, 24, 27]. There are large uncertainties associated with the estimation of arsenic emissions to the atmosphere, but most studies have shown that for the present-day conditions, the global anthropogenic sources are much more dominant than natural sources[19, 24, 28, 29].

In this study, we develop the first-ever global gridded emission inventory for arsenic (more details in the Methods section) and implement it in a global atmospheric chemical transport model (GEOS-Chem) to examine the global transport and source-receptor relationships for arsenic.

METHODS

We developed a global arsenic model based on the GEOS-Chem chemical transport model (http://geos-chem.org) v9-01-01. The GEOS-Chem model has been applied to a wide range of research related to atmospheric trace gases, aerosols and mercury[30-32]. It is driven by assimilated meteorological fields from NASA GMAO.

Available data on arsenic emissions for various regions around the world were compiled, processed and gridded to 4^{o} latitude by 5^{o} longitude for the model with a base year of 2005 (unless otherwise specified). For Chile, the major arsenic source region in the Southern Hemisphere, we followed Gidhagen et al.[16]. The Australian emissions were based on Australia's National Pollutant Inventory (NPI) (http://www.npi.gov.au/resource/arsenic-and-compounds-0). Arsenic emissions in the United States followed the U.S. EPA NATA (National-Scale Air Toxics Assessment) inventory for 1999 (http://www.epa.gov/ttn/atw/nata1999/index.html). The Canadian emissions were based on Environment Canada's National Pollutant Release Inventory (NPRI) (http://www.ec.gc.ca/inrp-npri). The European emissions of arsenic followed the ESPREME inventory (http://espreme.ier.uni-stuttgart.de).

There is no national emission inventory for arsenic emissions from metal smelting available for China, so we developed a new inventory for China in this study. It was derived using the production data of non-ferrous metals from the *Yearbook of Nonferrous Metals Industry of China 2005*[33] and the corresponding arsenic emission factors from Chilvers and Peterson[26]. Arsenic emissions from coal-fired power plants in China followed Tian et al.[34]. Initial model evaluation with our a priori arsenic emission inventory developed for China showed a systematic low bias for model-simulated arsenic concentrations over China. A likely reason for this low bias is that the arsenic emission factors[26] from metal smelting used in this study might be too low for China. So we scaled up the arsenic emissions due to metal smelting in China by a factor of 1.5 and then found very good agreement between model results and observational data (Figure 1).

Anthropogenic arsenic emissions from other countries around the world were estimated by taking advantage of the available SO_2 emission inventories from the Emissions Database for Global Atmospheric Research (EDGAR; http://edgar.jrc.ec.europa.eu). We followed EDGAR version 3[35] for SO_2 emissions in 2005 and applied a median value of 5.63×10^{-4} g As/g S for As/S emission ratios[36, 37] to derive the arsenic emissions from other countries not previously mentioned.

We also estimated arsenic emissions from volcanic activities based on the As/S correlations. We followed the global volcanic SO_2 emission inventory from Andres and Kasgnoc[38] and the

volcanic arsenic emissions were calculated using the ratio of 1.59 x 10^{-4} g As/g S, which is the median value of As/S flux ratios found for volcanic emissions around the world[39-42].

Because the absolute majority of atmospheric arsenic sorbs onto aerosols[43], we treated the deposition processes of arsenic similarly as $PM_{2.5}$ aerosols. The wet deposition of arsenic followed the scheme used by Liu et al.[44], which considers the scavenging from convective updrafts, rainout from convective anvils and rainout and washout from large-scale precipitation. The dry deposition followed a resistance-in-series scheme[45], with the surface resistances following the work of Zhang et al.[46]. The global total wet and dry deposition of arsenic was calculated to be 25.4 Gg yr^{-1} and 5.3 Gg yr^{-1}, respectively.

The global total atmospheric burden of arsenic is calculated to be 377 Mg leading to a global average atmospheric lifetime for arsenic of 4.5 days. The calculated atmospheric arsenic lifetimes against deposition range from 4.1 to 5.4 days for different regions around the world (Table 1), which are within the range (2.5 – 9 days) reported in the literature[17-19].

For model evaluation, we focused on atmospheric arsenic measurement data from nonurban sites given the coarse spatial resolution (4^o latitude x 5^o longitude) of the global model. We collected available measurement data from various regions around the world in the literature and compiled them in Table 2. Except for the time series data from the Mt. Bachelor Observatory, data for sites in the United States and Europe were from the Interagency Monitoring of Protected Visual

Environments (IMPROVE) and the European Monitoring and Evaluation Programme (EMEP) network, respectively. The MBO site has been used for over a decade to examine long-range transport of aerosol and gas phase pollutants in baseline air arriving to North America[47, 48]. Data from the MBO were obtained using a rotating drum impactor with 3-hour time resolution and with synchrotron X-ray fluorescence analysis[48].

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The global arsenic emissions are calculated to be 30.7 Gg yr^{-1} with the breakdown for major source regions (15.8 and 4.4 Gg yr^{-1} in East Asia and South America, respectively) summarized in Table 1. Our global total arsenic emission is comparable to previous studies by Walsh et al.[19] and Nriagu[27] who both estimated the global total arsenic emissions to be 31 Gg yr^{-1}. In contrast, Chilvers and Peterson[26] estimated a very large natural source for arsenic leading to a much higher global total arsenic emission of 73.5 Gg yr^{-1}. The model-simulated annual mean concentrations of atmospheric arsenic are compared with available measurement data in Figure 1 and Table 2. We find very good agreement between model results and observations with a high correlation ($r^2 = 0.98$).

Figure 1 shows the annual average arsenic concentrations in ambient air driven by synoptic transport events. High arsenic concentrations (10 ng m^{-3} or higher) are found over large areas in eastern China and northern Chile (Figure 1), which are at least one order of magnitude higher

than those in the United States and Europe. Figure 1 also illustrates the outflow of arsenic plumes from Asia, which are transported over the North Pacific and North America following the Westerlies. Similarly the arsenic plumes from North America are transported across the North Atlantic towards Europe. In the Southern Hemisphere, the major arsenic source is Chile. The arsenic plumes at lower latitudes are transported towards the tropical Pacific following the trade winds, and those at higher latitudes are transported towards the Southern Atlantic following the Westerlies. We further evaluate the model performance in simulating the daily time series of measured atmospheric arsenic concentrations at the Mt. Bachelor Observatory (MBO, 44.0° N, 121.7° W), located on the west coast of the United States (Figure 2). The model reproduces the temporal variations in arsenic concentrations reasonably well ($r^2 = 0.35$).

In order to better examine the source-receptor relationships between various regions in terms of arsenic concentration and deposition, we carry out a suite of sensitivity simulations where anthropogenic arsenic emissions from a certain region are turned off in the model. For example, we shut off emissions from Asia in the sensitivity model run and then compare the calculated atmospheric arsenic deposition (D_{no_Asia}) with those from the base run (D_{base}) to derive the percentage contribution of Asian emissions to atmospheric arsenic in the receptor region: $Contribution_{Asia} = (D_{base} - D_{no\_Asia}) / D_{base} \times 100\%$. Figure 3 shows the contribution to total (wet + dry) deposition from each continental-scale source region.

Anthropogenic arsenic emissions from Asia are found to make the largest contributions to atmospheric arsenic deposition over the North Pacific Ocean and western North America (Figure

3a). About 10-60% of atmospheric arsenic concentration and 30-70% of total arsenic deposition over the western part of North America are attributed to Asian emissions. Significant contributions to the Arctic region (up to 60% for atmospheric concentration and 70% for total arsenic deposition) are calculated for Asian emissions (Figure 3a).

Figure 3b shows the contribution from European anthropogenic arsenic emissions. The European contributions mainly extend northward to the Arctic and eastward over part of Russia. The European emissions are also found to contribute to arsenic deposition over the Mediterranean Sea by up to 60%. Figure 3c shows the contribution from North American anthropogenic arsenic emissions. The eastward transport of the arsenic-laden plumes from North America leads to its large contribution to the arsenic deposition over the North Atlantic Ocean (up to 80% right off the eastern coast of the US).

The contribution of anthropogenic arsenic emissions from South America is found to dominate over the Southern Hemisphere except for Southern Africa and Australia (Figure 3d). Up to 90% of arsenic deposition over the Antarctic is attributed to emissions from South America, which confirms the hypothesis by Hong et al.[23].

The source-receptor relationships for atmospheric arsenic concentration and deposition between major regions in the Northern Hemisphere are summarized in Table 3. On average, about 39% of the total arsenic deposition over the Arctic region is attributed to Asian anthropogenic emissions,

reflecting the strong arsenic emissions from Asia. The European anthropogenic emissions are calculated to contribute almost 14% of the total arsenic deposition to the Arctic. The North American contribution to arsenic in the Arctic (about 4%) is found to be much less than those from Asia or Europe, reflecting both the lower anthropogenic emission strengths and the lower latitudes of the sources. The Asian anthropogenic emissions are found to contribute to the total arsenic deposition in North America by 38%.

The inter-continental transport of arsenic, especially the significant global impacts associated with arsenic emissions from certain source regions as shown by our results, highlights the benefits of international cooperation to reduce arsenic pollution around the world. These source-receptor relationships should be considered by researchers and policymakers in designing mitigation strategies for arsenic pollution.

217 FIGURES

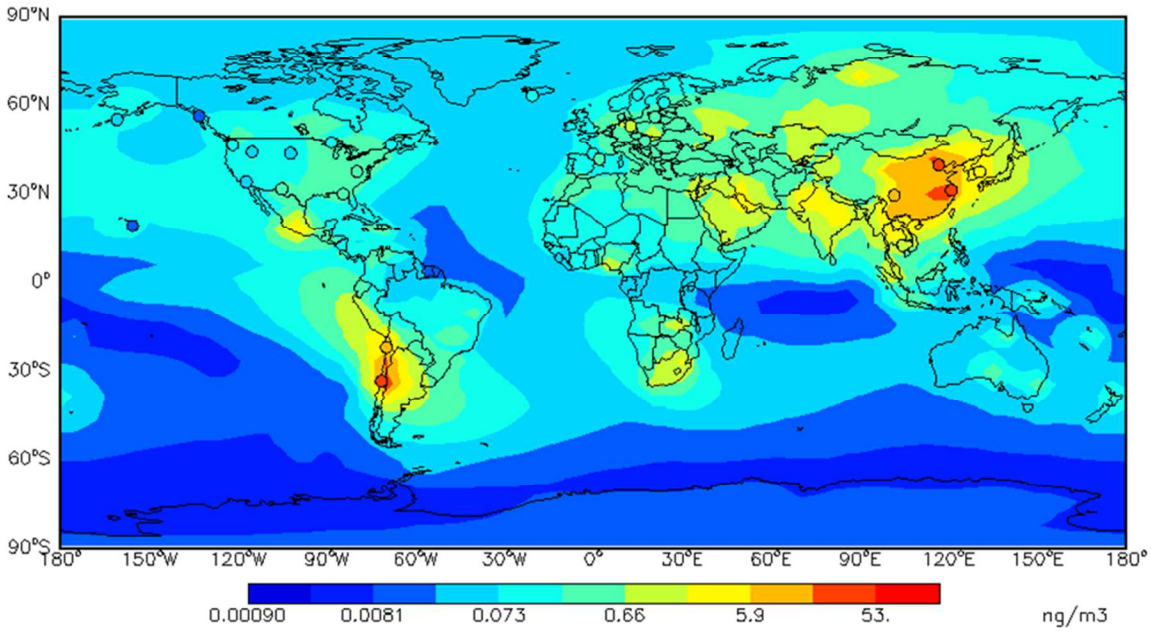


Figure 1. Arsenic concentrations in surface air. Model-simulated annual mean arsenic concentrations (background) in ambient air compared with measurement data at various stations (circles) around the world.

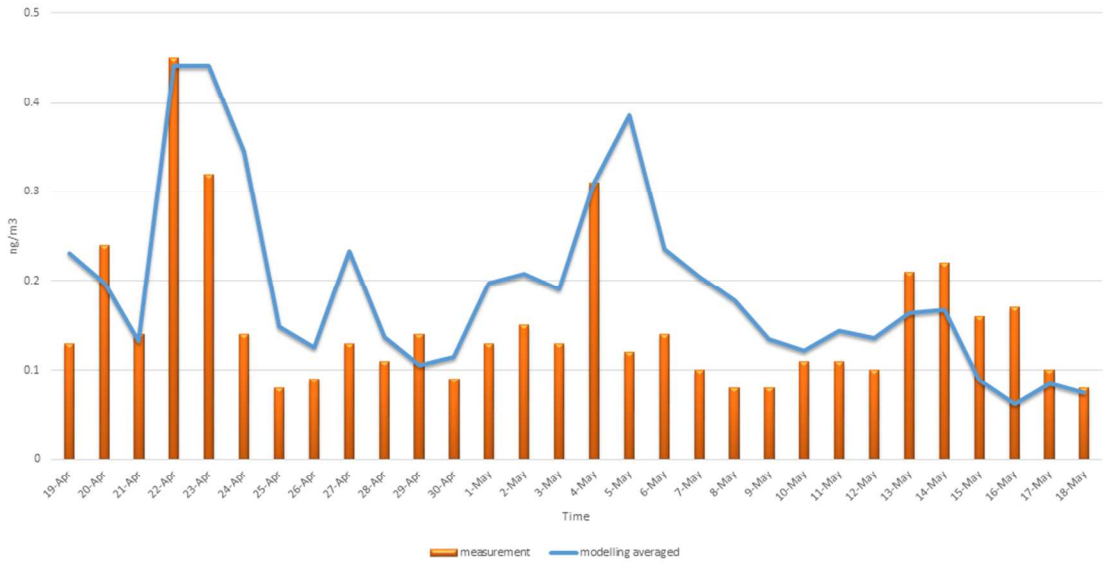
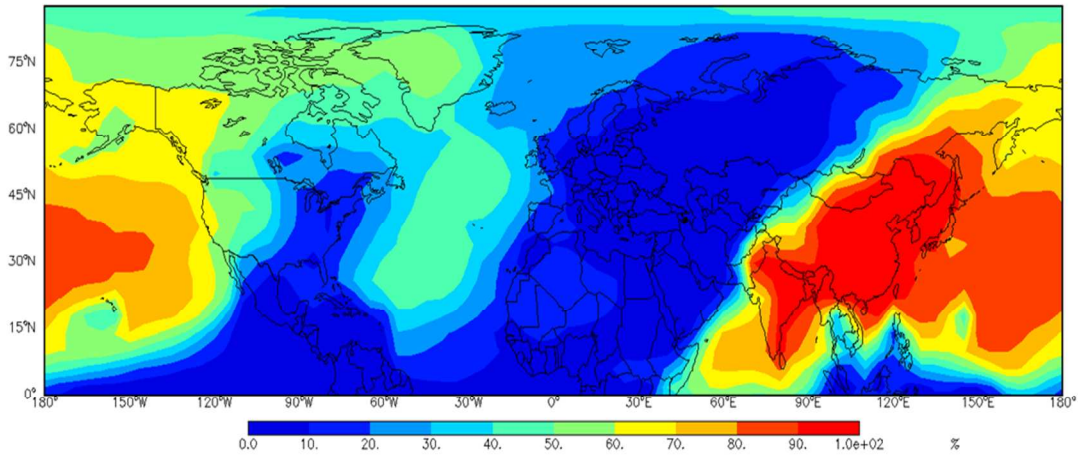


Figure 2. Daily arsenic concentrations in spring 2011. Measured daily average arsenic concentrations at the Mt. Bachelor Observatory (located on the west coast of the United States) compared with model results.

(a)


75°N
60°N
45°N
30°N
15°N
0°
180°
150°W
120°W
90°W
60°W
30°W
0°
30°E
60°E
90°E
120°E
150°E
180°
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40.
50.
60.
70.
80.
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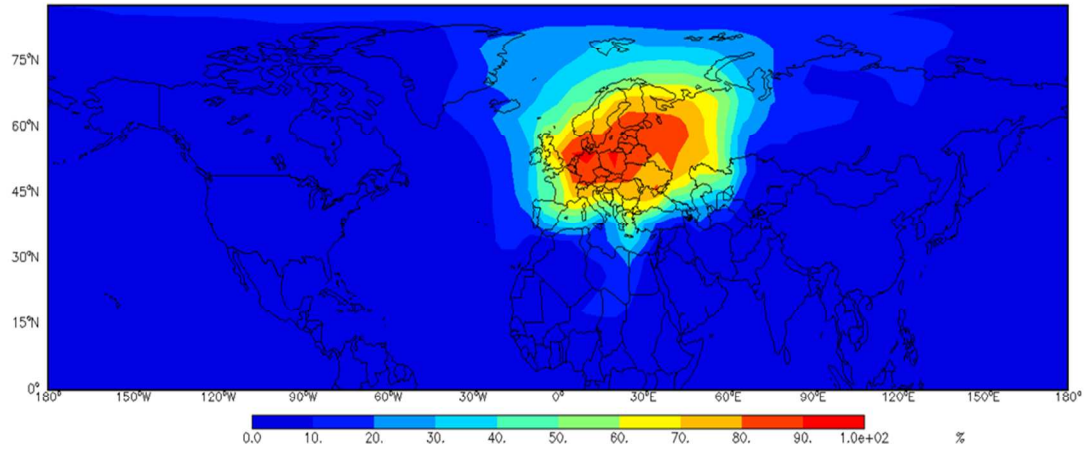
1.0e+02
%

(b)


75°N
60°N
45°N
30°N
15°N
0°
180°
150°W
120°W
90°W
60°W
30°W
0°
30°E
60°E
90°E
120°E
150°E
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40.
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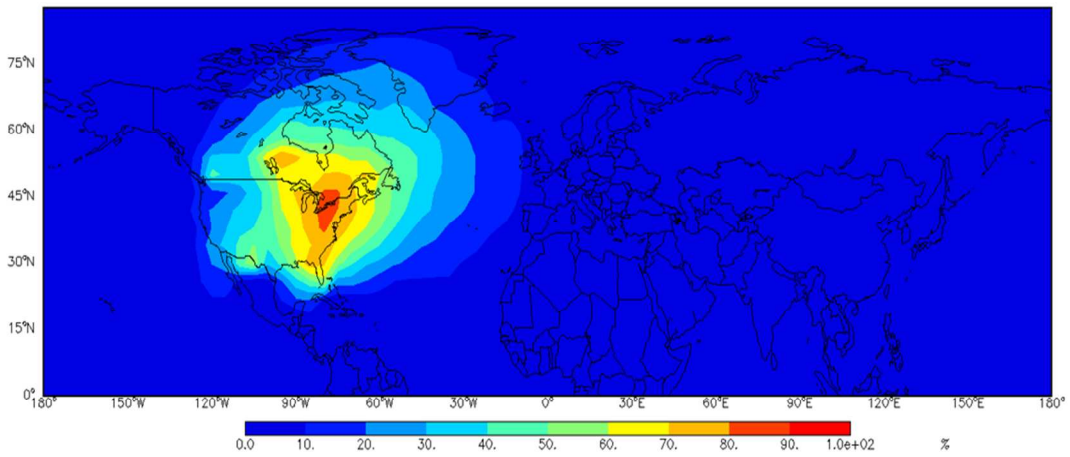
(c)



(d)

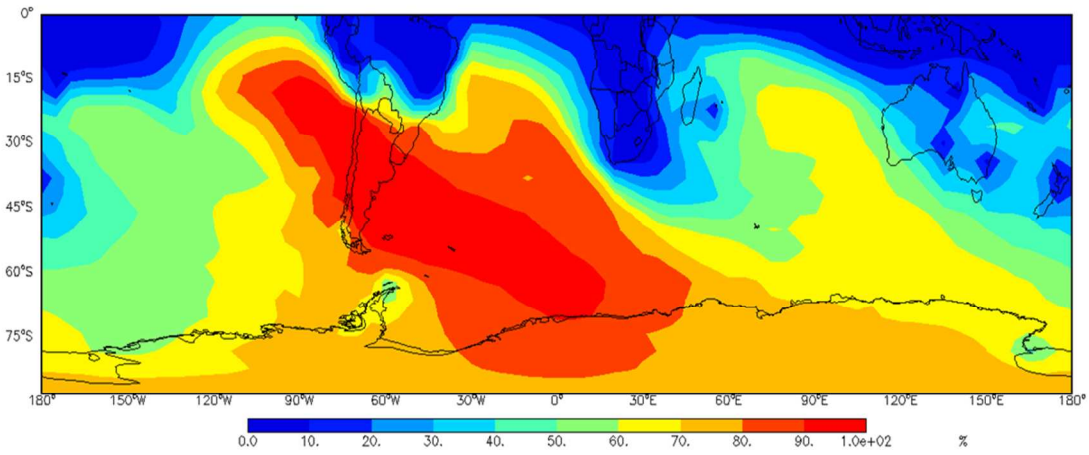


Figure 3. Source attribution for arsenic deposition. Shown as percentage of total atmospheric arsenic deposition attributable to emissions from: (a) Asia; (b) Europe; (c) North America; and (d) South America.

218 TABLES.

Table 1. Sources and average atmospheric lifetimes of arsenic for various regions*.

	Global	East Asia	Europe	North America	South America
Sources (Gg yr^{-1})	30.7	15.8	0.9	0.6	4.4
Life-time (days) †	4.5	4.1	4.1	5.4	4.5

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220 *Including both anthropogenic and natural sources; the geographical regions are defined as: East
221 Asia (20–56°N, 92.5–152.5°E); Europe (36–72°N, 12.5°W–62.5°E); North America (24–60°N,
222 132.5– 57.5°W); South America (40–4°S, 82.5–57.5°W).

223

224 † Atmospheric life-time of arsenic against deposition (dry deposition plus wet deposition).

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Table 2. Model-simulated annual average surface atmospheric arsenic concentrations compared with observations.

Site	Model result ($ng\ m^{-3}$)	Observations ($ng\ m^{-3}$)	Year of observations	Source/Reference for observational data
Storhofdi, Iceland (63.4°N, 20.3°W)	0.07	0.18	2005	EMEP
Peyrusse Vieille, France (43.6°N, 0.2°E)	0.14	0.20	2005	EMEP
Neuglobsow, Germany (53.1°N, 13.0°E)	0.47	0.86	2005	EMEP
Topoliniky, Slovakia (48.0°N, 17.8°E)	0.84	0.44	2005	EMEP
Montseny, Spain (41.8°N, 2.4°E)	0.20	0.29	2005	EMEP
Bredkalen, Sweden (63.8°N, 15.3°E)	0.09	0.10	2002	EMEP
Pallas, Finland (61.0°N, 24.2°E)	0.27	0.15	2005	EMEP
Rucava, Latvia (56.2°N, 21.1°E)	0.27	0.38	2005	EMEP
Florida, US (30.1°N, 84.2°W)	0.48	0.46	2005	IMPROVE
Virginia, US (37.6°N, 79.5°W)	0.63	0.44	2005	IMPROVE
Maine, US (46.7°N, 68.0°W)	0.25	0.16	2005	IMPROVE
Michigan, US (47.5°N, 88.1°W)	0.19	0.15	2004	IMPROVE
South Dakota, US (43.7°N, 101.9°W)	0.14	0.05	2005	IMPROVE
Texas, US (31.8°N, 104.8°W)	0.23	0.23	2005	IMPROVE
Washington, US (46.6°N, 121.4°W)	0.18	0.12	2005	IMPROVE
California, US (34.2°N, 116.9°W)	0.18	0.07	2005	IMPROVE
Idaho, US (44.2°N, 114.9°W)	0.19	0.03	2005	IMPROVE
Hawaii, US (19.4°N, 155.3°W)	0.10	0.01	2005	IMPROVE

Alaska1, US (56.5°N, 132.8°W)	0.07	0.02	2005	IMPROVE
Alaska2, US (55.3°N, 160.5°W)	0.08	0.04	2005	IMPROVE
Beijing, China (39.8°N, 117.0°E)	22	18	2005	[15]
Shanghai, China (31.4°N, 121.3°E)	26	27	2004-2005	[49]
Sichuan, China (29.6°N, 102.0°E)	4.2	6.1	2006	[50]
Ulleung Island, S. Korea (37.5°N, 130.9°E)	3.6	3.0	2003-2008	[51]
Quillota, Chile (32.9°S, 71.2°W)	30	31	1999-2000	[16]
Quillagua, Chile (21.6°S, 69.5°W)	4.4	6.5	1999-2000	[16]

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Table 3. Source-receptor relationships for atmospheric arsenic concentration (deposition) between various regions*.

		Source regions		
		Asia	Europe	North America
Receptor regions	Arctic	24.9 (39.2)	14.2 (13.8)	3.9 (4.3)
	Asia	56.3 (58.0)	4.3 (4.9)	0.1 (0.2)
	Europe	6.4 (10.0)	68.6 (60.1)	1.3 (2.0)
	North America	25.7 (38.2)	2.0 (1.1)	55.1 (41.4)
	Western US	36.0 (48.3)	0.4 (0.4)	45.9 (30.0)
	Eastern US	8.9 (16.3)	0.2 (0.2)	85.0 (67.7)

*Shown as the percentage contribution to total atmospheric arsenic concentration (deposition) in the receptor region attributable to emissions from the source region. The geographical regions are defined as: Arctic (64 – 90°N, 180°W – 180°E); Asia (8 – 72°N, 57.5 –147.5°E); Europe (32 – 72°N, 7.5°W – 62.5°E); North America (28–72°N, 127.5–62.5°W); Western US (28 – 48°N, 127.5 – 97.5°W); Eastern US (28–48°N, 97.5–67.5°W).

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Author Contributions

K.M.W. and S.W. designed the entire study and wrote the manuscript. K.M.W. developed the arsenic model based on the standard GEOS-Chem model and did all model experiments and analysis of outputs. X.L. assisted the project with literature review and database preparation at the early stage of the project. D.A.J. and K.D.P. provided data of atmospheric arsenic measurements from Mt. Bachelor Observatory, USA.

Notes

The authors declare no competing financial interest.

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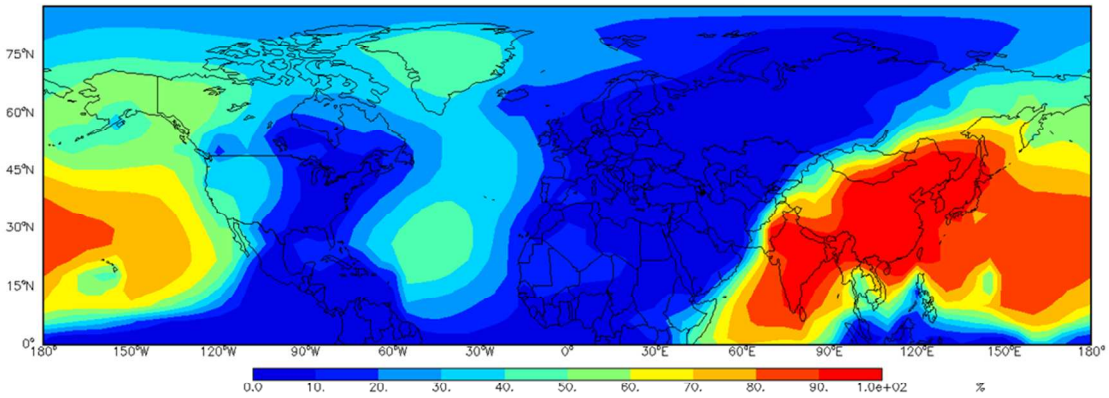
366 Table of Contents Graphic



367