

Subject: FW: What's causing cancer? Don't accept the pesticide brush-off...

Date: Fri, 9 Sep 2005 07:53:06 -0700

From: "Ernie Crist" <ernie_crist@dnv.org>

To: "Mayor and Council - DNV" <Council@dnv.org>, "Senior Management Committee" <managecomm@dnv.org>, "Richard Boase" <Richard_Boase@dnv.org>, "Ken Bennett" <Ken_Bennett@dnv.org>, "James Ridge" <James_Ridge@dnv.org>

CC: <fonvca@fonvca.org>

A MESSAGE FROM ERNIE CRIST - Pesticides are harmless - I know because the Pesticide companies told me so.

The stories below are passed on to you courtesy Ernie Crist.

-----Original Message-----

From: Mike Christie [<mailto:mikechristie@rogers.com>]

Sent: Friday, September 09, 2005 3:27 AM

To: Recipient List Suppressed

Subject: What's causing cancer? Don't accept the pesticide brush-off....

Jun. 13, 2005.

Toronto Star

What's causing cancer? Chemicals fingered as rates reach epidemic proportions,

by Mitchell Anderson

Cancer in Canada is now projected to afflict one in every 2.2 men and one in every 2.6 women in their lifetime. In the 1930s, those numbers were less than one in 10. What's happening? Why are we now seeing what many are calling a "cancer epidemic"?

Some would suggest we are simply an aging population and cancer is a disease of the old. Not true. Recent statistics show that the net incidence rate of cancer has increased 25 per cent for males and 20 per cent for females from 1974 to 2005 - after correcting for the effects of aging.

Children are increasingly the victims. Researchers in Britain have shown that certain childhood cancers such as leukemia and brain cancer have increased by more than a third since the 1950s.

In Canada, hundreds of millions of dollars are raised and spent for cancer research and treatment. The elephant in the room, however, is the contribution of environmental toxins and whether many of the cancers striking Canadians can be avoided rather than simply managed.

The World Health Organization estimates that fully 25 per cent of cancers worldwide are caused by occupational and environmental factors other than smoking. You don't have to look far for some potential chemical culprits.

There are more than 85,000 chemicals that are currently licensed for use in North America. Less than half have ever been tested for human health risk and even fewer for potential environmental impacts.

The U.S. Centers For Disease Control recently turned their attention toward pollution detection - not in the environment, but within the human body. Their study in 2002 found the presence of 81 different toxic chemicals, including PCBs, benzene and other carcinogens in their sampling of 2,500 people tested.

It is somewhat of a no-brainer that reducing exposure to known carcinogens will reduce the risk of developing cancer. Surprisingly, this simple logic seems to have been lost on our federal government. Many chemicals that are scientifically demonstrated carcinogens or

otherwise toxic are freely used here without any legal obligation to identify them on the label. Some of these same chemicals are entirely banned elsewhere. A trip to your local supermarket reveals a small sample of these hidden poisons:

Mothballs contain either naphthalene or paradichlorobenzene, both of which are carcinogenic. A recent U.S. study linked mothball use to an increased incidence of non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. Polycarbonate plastics used in food-grade plastic containers such as water bottles can leach Bisphenol A, an estrogen-mimicking chemical linked to a variety of disorders, including hormone-related birth defects, learning disabilities, prostate cancer and neuro-degenerative diseases such as Alzheimer's disease.

Several leading perfumes, nail polishes and other cosmetic products sold in Canada contain the endocrine-disrupting phthalates DBP and DEHP - both banned for use in cosmetic products in European Union countries.

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers or PBDEs are common chemical fire retardants found in everything from foam mattresses to computer parts. They have similar properties to the now outlawed PCBs and are known neurotoxins and hormone disrupters. The most dangerous forms are now banned in the EU, though they remain legal here in Canada.

Many leading brands of household laundry detergent contain trisodium nitrilotriacetate, another suspected carcinogen as well as an environmental pollutant.

Chemicals that endanger human life also go down the drain and impact the environment. A gruesome example involved a dead orca that washed up south of Vancouver in 2000 that was so contaminated with persistent chemicals that Ottawa considered shipping the carcass to the Swan Hills toxic waste facility for incineration.

Like orcas, we are perched at the top of the food chain and are becoming the unwitting receptacles of many of the chemicals designed to make our lives more convenient.

Ballooning cancer rates are simply not worth whiter clothes or fewer moths.

Cancer must be fought on many fronts. Research and treatment are undeniably important but so is environmental cancer prevention. It is therefore shocking that our government is not moving faster to ban known and suspected carcinogens, and requiring mandatory "right to know" labelling so that Canadians can better protect themselves and their families.

Anything less is quite simply putting the interests of the chemical industry ahead of human life.

Mitchell Anderson is a board member of the Labour Environmental Alliance Society, a Vancouver-based charity that educates the public on cancer prevention.

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Labour Environmental Alliance Society

Don't accept the pesticide brush-off

by Sean Griffin

It's already more than 10 years ago since researchers in Missouri

conducting a study on children with brain tumours found a strong association between those deadly cancers and the use of pesticide products such as pest strips and insect sprays in the home.

Two years later, a study in the Denver area showed an increase in the incidence of leukemia among people living in households where home and garden pesticides were used regularly.

Those are only two of several disturbing studies that link ordinary household pesticide use with an increased risk of childhood and adult cancers cited in the recent Pesticides Literature Review (entire review) released April 23 by the Ontario College of Family Physicians (press release). So why isn't everybody talking about them?

Well, actually a lot of people are - the momentum to enact municipal bylaws against the use of cosmetic pesticides is growing across the country, with some 64 municipal councils signed up and more putting it in the agenda. The Ontario study has helped spur that campaign.

But part of the problem is the pooh-poohing from the media, which regularly fill the broadcast air with stories about a confined risk such as avian flu, but dismiss the more pervasive risk of everyday toxic exposure.

One example was Barbara McClintock, a contributing editor to the online journal TheTyee.ca who wrote a piece last month that dismissed the Ontario study and even suggested that worrying about pesticides might discourage people from eating fruits and vegetables. TheTyee headlined it "Beware the Pesticide Scare."

"Almost none of the studies used involve ordinary families who put a flea collar on the dog, or eat non-organic produce or even use pesticides once or twice a year to get rid of the tent caterpillars on the trees or the weeds in the lawn," McClintock said.

It's true there aren't a lot of studies anywhere that follow ordinary families on any health issue - and that lack of data is part of the problem. But the studies that have been done on ordinary people from ordinary households - as charted in the Pesticides Literature Review - show an alarming trend. They show that pesticide use, even when it's only household pesticides, signals a higher incidence of brain and kidney cancer, leukemia and non-Hodgkin's lymphoma, as well as other ailments, including birth defects.

That growing body of evidence is what has prompted various groups to urge both public and individual action to curb pesticide use. Last year, the Canadian Cancer Society published a brochure urging consumers to look for alternatives to pesticides and encouraging public support for municipal bylaws restricting pesticide use.

It's what prompted us at the Labour Environmental Alliance to publish the CancerSmart Consumer Guide. The 24-page guide tracks carcinogenic (cancer-causing) chemicals and reproductive toxicants in dozens of household pesticides as well as cleaning and home maintenance products. More important, it offers practical alternatives and substitute products.

The materials for that guide weren't just pulled off a brochure sitting at the back of the health food store - the research data is drawn from authoritative sources such as the UN International Agency for Research on Cancer and the U.S. National Toxicology Program. There's a lot of well-documented data on the ingredients in pesticides, even household pesticides - and it is scary.

Unfortunately, Barbara McClintock's assurance that it's nothing but a "pesticide scare" sound disturbingly like the assurances from the Urban Pest Management Council, the group representing manufacturers such as Dupont and Monsanto. "Certain doses of pesticides can have serious

health effects," acknowledged UPMC spokesperson Wendy Rose.
"But if they are properly used, pesticides leave only traces behind."
Even if you accept that, how big are the traces? What is their effect?

Rose also insists that the industry is the "most regulated in Canada"
- while arguing that that there's no need to review pesticides
registered before 1995. What about the new research on health effects
that's been done in the last 10 years?

In fact, numerous products registered for use in Canada and sold
regularly in garden and home improvement stores across the province
contain known carcinogens listed by IARC and the NTP and known
reproductive toxicants listed by California's Office of Environmental
Health Hazard Assessment.

Chlorophenoxy herbicides, such as 2-4-D, used in products such as
Killex, are sold across the country as weed killers. Chlorophenoxy
herbicides are carcinogenic and have been linked in studies to a higher
incidence of leukemia. Captan, widely used as a bulb dust in such
products as Sevin, is likewise carcinogenic.

According to the list in the CancerSmart Consumer Guide, there are 12
carcinogens in regular use in household pesticide products, and another
four reproductive toxicants.

Should we be concerned about using those products even a few times?
You bet. There is no science anywhere that guarantees a safe level of
exposure to carcinogens. And when there are readily available
alternatives - whether they're safer products or safer methods - it only
makes sense that we would use those instead.

Then there's the question of pesticides and food? Barbara McClintock
argues that raising an alarm about pesticides residues on produce is
counter-productive because it will discourage us from eating fruits and
vegetables, and we need them for health and cancer prevention.
The curious thing is that the Ontario Physicians report never raised the
issue of pesticides on food and didn't make any recommendations about
fruit and vegetable consumption.

Still, while we're on the subject, it's worth noting that Canadian Food
Inspection Agency has itself reported that the number of pesticides now
being used in this country that were never before used in Canada has
gone up significantly as a result of trade harmonization. And last year,
the federal Commissioner of the Environment and Sustainable Development
warned that there were 190 additional pesticides used in Canada for
which CFIA has no practical detection method.

It's true, eating organic isn't cheap. But going organic in some cases
and eating conventional produce when you can seems like a good approach
as long as you have the necessary information. The CancerSmart Guide
includes a "most contaminated" and "least contaminated" list - based on
CFIA testing data - to help consumers decide when they can stick with
conventional produce and when it's a good time to head to the organic
aisle.

In the end, it isn't about a "pesticide scare" or any other kind of
consumer scare. It's about providing consumers with the sound
information they need to make good decisions for their own health and
their kids' health. By that measure, stories such as McClintock's piece
didn't cut it. Readers should go and read the Ontario Family Physicians
study for themselves.

Don't accept the pesticide brush-off.

<http://www.leas.ca/News/PesticideBrushOff.htm>

Labour Environmental Alliance Society


1203--207 West Hastings Street
Vancouver B.C.,
V6B 1H7
E-mail: info@leas.ca
Ph. 604-669-1921
Fax: 604-696-9627
<http://www.leas.ca/>

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Mike Christie
(613) 228-7499 / bus.
(613) 228-7487 / fax.
mikechristie@rogers.com / e-mail

The Laws of Ecology: "All things are interconnected. Everything goes
somewhere. There's no such thing as a free lunch. Nature bats last."

by Ernest Callenbach

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