

Pesticide use on hospital lawns reviewed

Last Updated: Thursday, August 6, 2009 | 5:56 PM ET [Comments 37](#) [Recommend 16](#)

CBC News



Ann Lindsey questioned why the WRHA would use pesticides on the grounds of a centre with terminally ill patients. (CBC)

The Winnipeg Regional Health Authority is reviewing its use of chemicals on grass and grounds of hospitals after an environmental activist asked why a neighbourhood health centre was spraying toxic pesticides.

Anne Lindsey, spokeswoman for the Campaign for Pesticide Reduction, was working in a community garden behind the WRHA's Riverview Health Centre when she found out that staff sprayed chemicals on the hospital grounds.

She called the health authority to ask why it would spray chemicals that have been linked to cancer on grass at a facility that houses terminally ill cancer patients.

The health agency says it will review the situation and probably ban the use of cosmetic pesticides.

"We are reviewing what the practices are ...and drafting a policy that we hope will be in place for next year," said WRHA spokesperson Heidi Graham. The new policy "will make it clear we would like more eco-friendly alternatives in terms of fertilizers and pesticides on our sites," she said.

Kristina Hunter, an environmental health researcher at the University of Winnipeg, said it is exquisitely ironic that chemicals that have been linked to cancer should be sprayed on the lawns of Riverview, a palliative care and geriatric health centre in Winnipeg's Fort Rouge area.

"I just don't think it's a great idea to have patients in a hospital with chemicals being sprayed on their grounds," said Hunter. "Those patients are probably sensitive to those chemicals — and it's just sending the wrong message."

Lindsey said she was equally concerned about the health of people in the neighbourhood. "It's not just [at Riverview] that lawn care chemicals are used, it's all over our city."

The City of Winnipeg requires landscaping companies that spray chemicals to post appropriate signs. Manitoba has no blanket ban on urban-use pesticides.

A 2004 omnibus study by the Ontario College of Family Physicians showed a link between some pesticides and illnesses such as cancer, reproductive problems and neurological diseases, among others. The study also said that children are particularly vulnerable to pesticides.

The Saskatoon Regional Health Authority recently banned use of cosmetic herbicides, fearing chemical exposure to patients and visitors.

Manitoba Conservation said it has begun consulting with stakeholders to get input for a possible

provincewide ban on cosmetic pesticides commonly used on residential lawns — but is unable to put one into effect for 2009.

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brown2 wrote: Posted 2009/08/12

at 11:59 AM ET in my opinion we should use common sense. i don't like that term "cosmetic use". that is not the main reason i spray my lawn. having a healthy lawn is important. if you let the dandelions and thistles grow, which they will as they are a very competitive weeds, they will soon take over your lawn. between your dandelions there won't be much sod bound grass left. and if we get our famous Winnipeg 2 inch rains the water and much of the natural occurring soil phosphate will be more apt to run off go down the drains and into our waterways. if you have a nice established lawn the rain water will tend to be used up by the lawn and will have a more downward movement versus running off. btw riverview is near the river i assume. also my son plays soccer. if you ever tried to play sports on a field of dandelions (which is a broadleaf plant), it is very slippery and could cause injury to our kids. I would rather have my son play on a nice grass field. use common sense. spray using the labeled directions, or get a lawn care company to spray as they are trained. stay off of the grass for a while after application and we should all be fine.

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[4 Agree](#) [2 Disagree](#) [Policy Report abuse](#)

jimbob1957 wrote: Posted 2009/08/11

at 2:26 PM ET Reviewed for what ? It's already common knowledge that pesticides and herbicides cause cancer so why are the hospitals the last ones to declare a ban on them for their use ?

This statement is not true. Pesticides include all products (herbicides, insecticide, germicides, rodenticides, fungicides, etc.) to claim all pesticides cause cancer is a false statement.

The products that are used in the lawn care business are herbicides to control weeds. All of these herbicides are registered by Health Canada through the PMRA department. You can go onto their website and read all the material safety data sheets of the herbicides that are used for lawn care.

The main product in the lawn care business is 2,4-D. 2,4-D went through re-registration last year in Canada (PMRA), United States (EPA), and the European Union (EPC). It was held up to the new registration standards that are in place for all new products registered. There was now link found between the use of 2,4-D and cancer in all three countries. There never has been a scientific study linking 2,4-D and cancer.

The studies that people have got brainwashed into believing are nothing more than surveys. If I ask 10 people if they drink milk and all answered yes, then I ask if they get headaches and 7 say yes. Making the statement milk causes headaches is the same methodology as these studies.

If you are really worried about getting cancer, never fill your car, lawnmower, motorhome with gas. Gasoline contains benzene a highly carcinogenic substance. There is a direct link between people working in the industry and brain cancer.

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8 Agree 2 Disagree Policy Report abuse

Sandra12 wrote: Posted 2009/08/08

at 11:36 PM ET I am very pleased to see this article and am sorry I missed the television interview. I am bewildered why it is taking Manitoba and especially our health authority to come to a decisive conclusion in favour of banning the use of toxic cosmetic pesticides and herbicides. I believe there is sufficient evidence linking the use of pesticides and herbicides to insidious and challenging health problems. I would like to congratulate CBC and Anne Lindsay for their public stand and look forward to more pressure being placed on the appropriate levels of government and government funded organizations to take this next step, one that other provinces have taken.

I am part of the Riverview Garden Society and live in the areas as well. I made my concerns known about the impact of the cosmetic use of toxic chemicals when I became aware of them to the Minister of Conservation and appropriate members of the legislature. I was also pleased to hear Pat Martin speak of his submission to the federal government about this topic.

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4 Agree 8 Disagree Policy Report abuse

Simonkung wrote: Posted 2009/08/08

at 12:29 PM ET We better get right on banning cars too.

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9 Agree 2 Disagree Policy Report abuse

Ivori_Gurl wrote: Posted 2009/08/08

at 8:46 AM ET "Reviewed for what ? It's already common knowledge that pesticides and herbicides cause cancer so why are the hospitals the last ones to declare a ban on them for their use ?"

...exactly...

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5 Agree 9 Disagree Policy Report abuse

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