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Society explains its stance

By Vernon Morning Star
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Recently in your publication, there has been a dialogue on pesticides and the Canadian Cancer Society's position on their use. We would like to provide some additional information and clarity on the society's stance on the cosmetic use of pesticides as well as how that position was determined.

The Canadian Cancer Society's positions are based on the highest quality scientific research and expert consensus. In reviewing the scientific evidence, the society considers a multitude of factors: the size of the study population, the length of follow-up, the ability to control for bias and confounders, who funded the research, the source of publication/release of results and more.

The society also consults external experts to assist in interpreting the research in their field of expertise.

As with all science, there is often conflicting data. Consequently, the society relies on the weight of the evidence and forms positions when many credible studies have the same conclusions or findings.

These positions are then reviewed by a minimum of two experts before being approved.

There are some situations where the evidence of harm may be inconclusive. In these cases, if the evidence is growing, suggestive and the threat of harm to human health exists, the society bases decision-making using the precautionary principle.

In other words, in these situations, we believe it is better to be safe than sorry and to start taking precautions.

The society believes that when it comes to unnecessary cosmetic pesticide exposure there is sufficient evidence to take precautionary action.

More than 100 studies have been evaluated by internationally renowned organizations, such as the International Agency for Research on Cancer and U.S. National Toxicology Program, and the weight of the evidence links exposure to pesticides with certain types of cancer.

This includes childhood and adult leukemias, childhood brain cancer, non-Hodgkin's' lymphoma, brain cancer, kidney cancer, pancreatic cancer and some lung cancers.

We now know that about half of all cancers are preventable. Prohibiting the use of cosmetic pesticides is both responsible and respectful of the state of the scientific evidence.

We thank the 40 municipalities throughout B.C. who have shown leadership by adopting cosmetic pesticide by-laws and we encourage more to do the same.

We will also continue to urge the B.C. government to pass strong province-wide cosmetic pesticide legislation. This fall, the society encourages everyone to create their own 'game plan' to reduce cancer risk.

To find out more and get involved visit HYPERLINK "http://www.cancergameplan.ca" www.cancergameplan.ca

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