



## Problematic pesticides

Notwithstanding claims made by Mr. Corcoran, there is a great deal of science showing links between pesticide exposure and very serious human illness.

BY NATIONAL POST JUNE 30, 2007

Re: King of pests, Terence Corcoran, June 23)

Notwithstanding claims made by Mr. Corcoran, there is a great deal of science showing links between pesticide exposure and very serious human illness.

To cite just two examples: In April, 2004, the Ontario College of Family Physicians (representing over 6,000 doctors) released a systematic literature review of pesticide research. It concluded that pesticides are associated with cancers, birth defects and neurological disease.

Perhaps most disturbing, the College discovered that children exposed to lawn and garden pesticides are at increased risk for leukemia.

Two years after this study was released, the prestigious Canadian Paediatric Society -- our country's premier authority on children's health -- published a scientific paper on the common herbicide 2,4-D. Its conclusion: "2,4-D can be persuasively linked to cancers, neurological impairment and reproductive problems."

There is a growing stream of peer-reviewed science showing significant health risks from pesticide exposure. This may explain why Canada's most respected science-based health experts -- such as the Canadian Cancer Society and the Ontario Medical Association (Section on Pediatrics) -- support the phase-out of pesticides on lawns and gardens.

Gideon Forman, executive director, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, Toronto

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### TERENCE CORCORAN RESPONDS:

This is why we have a Junk Science Week every year. The two sources cited by Mr. Forman have been thoroughly debunked.

The Family Physicians 2004 pesticide review caused such a sensation that the British Advisory Committee on Pesticides investigated and found the review full of discrepancies and unwarranted conclusions. Members of the British committee, for example, said they "strongly disagree" with the Ontario claim that "large well-designed cohort studies consistently show statistically significant positive associations" between solid tumours and pesticide exposure.

The British report also cited "serious flaws in the methods employed in the review" by the Ontario physicians. Among the flaws: - Failure to take account of all or even most of the relevant epidemiological evidence, and the biases inherent in the way in which material was picked out for inclusion; - Inadequate attention to exposure characteristics and relevant toxicology when interpreting reported associations; - Superficial synthesis of evidence, which inadequately explores the impact of the strengths and weaknesses of individual studies.

In the end, the British concluded that the Ontario review does not raise any new concerns about pesticide safety that were not already being addressed, and does not indicate any need for additional regulatory action in the U.K.

As for the Canadian Paediatric report on 2,4-D, here's what the federal government's Pest Management Regulatory Agency (PMRA) said in a new comprehensive review issued on June 19:

PMRA scientists concur "that on the basis of all available and relevant data, 2,4-D cannot be classified as to its human carcinogenicity." Translation: No evidence.

Like the British report, the PMRA essentially says pesticides such as 2,4-D can be used according to instructions without risk.

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