

Chemical Injuries Attributable to Pesticides, Toxic Products and Hazardous Waste: Nefarious Obstructions to Scientific Goals

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Nefarious obstructions to scientific goals include both dishonorable and illegal activities. Current laws, studies, and news reports reveal fraudulent concealment of hazardous waste, inappropriate influence by private corporate powers, and disinformation from corporate non-profit front groups and public relations firms. These miscreant activities prevent and discourage science that is needed to avoid chemical injuries through reduced exposures, regulation of dangerous products, and assessment of liability. Full disclosure will allow objective scientific inquiry without corruption by conflicted interests. Scientists may then advocate precautionary principles that will protect health and environment and allow long denied assistance and treatment for the chemically injured.

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The United States Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) stated in a 1991 Freedom of Information (FOIA) request,

“Hazardous waste is legally allowed to be recycled into pesticides as well as other commodities”

However, the EPA was unable to identify which pesticides or other commodities used hazardous waste in their products. [1] Fifteen years later these questions are still unanswered despite requests for production in civil lawsuits, subsequent FOIAs to various federal agencies, and despite the fact that some of the pesticides are now banned. These chemicals continue to injure and disable millions of people of all ages yet information on their provenance, content and contaminants remains a fraudulently concealed secret.

According to the Texas Dept. of Health and Bureau of Radiation Control (BRC) a list of pesticide ingredients they reviewed are often contaminated with “technologically enhanced Naturally Occurring Radioactive Material (NORM)”. Other indications of radiation in pesticides include the August 1991 legislative report, Agricultural and Rural Impacts of Uranium Recovery Activities in the South Texas Uranium District, principal investigator, Sarah Hana. This report mentions radiation in pesticides and fertilizers as a confounding factor in discovering the environmental and health effects of uranium mining. [2] Additionally, the EPA “Special Project” to investigate heavy metal and radiation inclusions in Pesticides revealed a memo from staffer, Amy Rispin, to Tina Levine, Ph.D.,

which stated,

“Marty Halper (with the radiation division)] indicated that it was possible that coal or petroleum products from certain naturally radioactive geological formations might themselves be radioactive.” [3]

Convicted corporate felons in the hazardous waste business have purchased nationwide pest control companies that apparently are being used to fraudulently conceal disposal of hazardous waste. [4] In “Silent Spring”, Rachel Carson wrote about her primary fear,

“In this now universal contamination of the environment, chemicals are the sinister and little-recognized partners of radiation in changing the very nature of the world.” [5]

Inappropriate conflicts of interest obstruct scientific goals by suppressing and blocking publication of important information. The current scandal regarding fluoridation of drinking water wherein Harvard study director, Chester Douglass, did not report a seven-fold increased risk from early fluoride exposures linked to osteosarcoma cancer in young boys, is but one example of scientific obstruction. Eleven Environmental Protection Agency employee unions have called for an investigation and an immediate nationwide halt on drinking water fluoride programs. [6]

Corporate Public Relation firms have used propaganda effectively for selling new drugs, promoting anti-environmental pro industry views, as well as spreading ‘blame the victim’ views maligning the chemically injured and disabled together with their physicians. In the Columbia Journalism Review article, “Bitter Pill”, author Trudy Lieberman states,

“as direct-to-consumer advertising has increased, delivering ever-higher ad revenues to the nation’s media. Instead of standing apart from the phenomenon and earning the public’s trust, the press too often is caught up in the same drug-industry marketing web that also ensnares doctors, academic researchers, even the FDA, leaving the public without a reliable watchdog.” [7]

Consistent attacks have been waged against the chemically injured as evidenced in the conflicts of interest in the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry’s (ATSDR) Interagency Workgroup Draft Report on MCS. The principal author/editor of this report, Dr. Frank Mitchell simultaneously served as advisor to anti- MCS/chemical injury industry front group, Environmental Sensitivities Research Institute (ESRI). [8] After years of denying the claims of chemical illness by Gulf War Veterans a new report has recognized these injuries. Citing new scientific research on the effects of exposure to low levels of neurotoxins, the Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans’ Illnesses concludes in its draft report that

“a substantial proportion of Gulf War veterans are ill with multisymptom conditions not explained by wartime stress or psychiatric illness.” [9]

There have been several instances where corporate powers have attempted to block any

assistance for those with chemical injuries. One such incident was reported by Ann Campbell, M.D., chair, Multiple Chemical Sensitivities Task Force of New Mexico, when industry front groups lobbied the New Mexico legislature against recognition and assistance for persons with Multiple Chemical Sensitivities as well as publishing an opinion editorial in two newspapers that criticized the New Mexico legislature for assisting the MCS population. [10]

When secrets involving the contents of chemicals as well as studies that illustrate chemical injuries are kept from scientific investigators the task of discovering causal links and cures for injuries becomes all but impossible.

In order to remove nefarious obstacles to scientific goals several actions must take place:

1. Repeal of provisions that encourage “recycling” of hazardous materials and radiation into pesticides and other consumer products and which reward bad actors. Failure to ban this practice prevents the elimination of toxic products and allows cheap and easy disposal of hazardous waste, while hiding the identity and liability of the corporations who are responsible for contamination and injuries. [11]
2. Repeal of “Confidential Business Information” laws that prevent investigators from discovering the complete contents of pesticides and other toxic products as well as “inert” and active ingredient suppliers. Modern reverse engineering allows disclosure of contents to all competitors; therefore information is only kept from investigators and victims of corporate injury. Confidential Business Information laws prevent physicians, scientists and attorneys from learning the full truth about toxic products and those responsible for injuries.
3. Prohibitions against conflicts of interest in scientific studies, on scientific and regulatory boards, and in educational settings. Scientific investigation must be based on unbiased truth.
4. Potentially harmful products must be labeled to disclose all contents, including “inerts” or contaminants such as heavy metals and radiation, and all suppliers of the constituent product. This provision embraces the Precautionary Principal that requires that action be taken when there is evidence of harm even if complete proof is not available. [12]

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Notes

1. Environmental Protection Agency, Freedom of Information response to Rep. James Clark, Dec. 11, 1990, document number 10F8.
2. Hana, Sarah, report to the 72nd Legislature of the State of Texas, August 1991, “Agricultural and Rural Impacts of Uranium Recovery Activities in the South Texas Uranium district.
3. Environmental Protection Agency memo from Amy Rispin to Tina Levin, Ph.D, Registration Division, included with letter dated Nov. 9, 1992 to E.M.T. O’Nan de Iglesias.
4. Helm, Andrea, Green Line, June 1991, Vol. IV, No. 9, “EPA waste policy threatens health”.

5. Carson, Rachel, "Silent Spring", 1962, Fawcett Crest Books.
6. National Treasury Employees Union Chapter 280, EPA Union Press Release, August 19, 2005, EPA Unions Call for Nationwide Moratorium on Fluoridation, Congressional Hearing on Adverse Effects, Youth Cancer Cover Up
7. Lieberman, Trudy "Bitter Pill", Columbia Journalism Review, July/August 2005.
8. Wilkenfeld, Irene, Comments on Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry's (ATSDR) Interagency Workgroup Draft Report on MCS, September 15, 1998.
9. Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veteran's Illnesses, 2004, Scientific Progress in Understanding Gulf War Veteran's Illnesses: Report and Recommendations
10. McCambell, Ann, 2001, "Multiple Chemical Sensitivities Under Siege", Townsend Letter for Doctors and Patients, issue 210.
11. Chapter 40 of the Code of Federal Regulations, Part 261, Sections 261.2 and 261.6
12. Montegue, Peter. 2004, Fourteen Reasons for Precaution, Rachel's Environment & Health News #791, May 13, 2004

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