

2011

COSMETIC USE OF PESTICIDES



Association of
Registered Nurses
of Newfoundland
and Labrador



This Public Policy Document was approved by ARNNL Council in 2011.

The Association of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador (ARNNL) supports the public call to the provincial government to enact legislation that would enable a ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides. Pesticides used for non-essential, aesthetic purposes for example, to improve the appearance of green spaces, are referred to as cosmetic use. Pesticide bans are required to maximize public safety. Experience has shown that public education is not enough.

Evidence of the connection between environment and health is well-established. Among the multiple environmental factors that impact health through individual, cumulative and synergistic effects, environmental exposures to toxic chemicals is a particular concern (Registered Nurses' Association of Ontario, 2008). Numerous studies illustrate a strong link between a range of health problems and pesticide exposure including: neurological problems, brain and lung cancer, immune suppression, Leukaemia, Parkinson's Disease, kidney damage, non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma and reproductive disorders including low sperm count and sterility (Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment, n.d.).

Children tend to get greater exposure whenever pesticides are released because of their behavior, for example, children often play in grass. Their developing organs and tissues are also more vulnerable to harm as their metabolic systems do not process or excrete toxins the way adult systems do. Children can even be exposed to pesticides in utero, when crucial physiological development starts (Canadian Partnership for Children's Health & Environment, 2011).

The David Suzuki Foundation reports that over 6,000 Canadians suffer from acute pesticide poisonings every year (David Suzuki Foundation, n.d.). Nearly half of those are children under the age of six. It claims that the numbers only reflect the tip of the iceberg as many poisonings are misdiagnosed, unreported or surface as chronic poisonings due to the impact of cumulative exposure.

ARNNL believes that health considerations must be paramount in the ongoing debate over the impact of pesticide use. The precautionary principle dictates that we insist on proof of safety, rather than waiting for proof of harm to justify a ban on cosmetic pesticides. Waiting until all possible cause-and-effect relationships are scientifically established might be too late. ARNNL believes that the evidence is strong enough that action must occur now. There is a demonstrated risk associated with pesticide use, there are no known countervailing health benefits, and there are effective and much safer alternatives available.

Registered Nurses have substantial concerns about the cosmetic use of pesticides. All of the above dictates the need to take the precautionary principle and policy approach. Precaution is of utmost importance because detection of pesticide damage in individuals is difficult to diagnose. Furthermore, the effects of pesticide damage are often only apparent after many years. Thus, people do not receive early warning signs that would allow them to take action in time.

ARNNL has a mandate to speak out for healthy public policy. Therefore in view of the known and potential risks, ARNNL calls upon the provincial government to enact legislation that would enable a ban on the use of cosmetic pesticides.



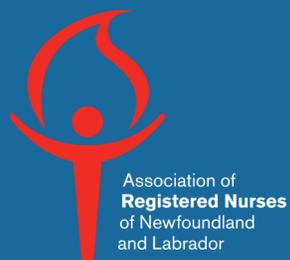
References

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Supporting Resources

- Canadian Cancer Society. *Our Position on Cosmetic Use of Pesticides*. Retrieved from: http://www.cancer.ca/Newfoundland-Labrador/Prevention/Specific%20environmental%20contaminants/Pesticides/Our%20position%20on%20cosmetic%20use%20of%20pesticides.aspx?sc_lang=en&r=1#ixzz1HXUB1OnH
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- World Health Organization. *Health Topics–Pesticides*. Retrieved from: <http://www.who.int/topics/pesticides/en/>
- Newfoundland & Labrador Environment Network. <http://www.nlen.ca/>
- Coalition for Alternatives to Pesticides-NL. <http://pesticidealternativesnl.wordpress.com>
- Sierra Club Canada. <http://www.sierraclub.ca/en>





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