

October 19, 2008  
Dr. Rob Parker Medical Health Officer North Okanagan

**MHO Statement on Cosmetic Pesticide Reduction Efforts.**

Recently, medical health officers have been asked to comment on the potential to reduce the cosmetic use of pesticides.

**In the absence of good information on the interaction between chemicals, reduction of exposures to chemicals is supportable**

- Research has been done to look at individual chemicals and their effects on animals/humans but little to no research has been done to examine how chemicals interact.
- Until this research is undertaken, it remains unclear whether multiple chemicals would have additive (or even synergistic) effects in influencing health outcomes.

Given this information, we support a reduction in exposure to chemicals.

**The precautionary principle should be applied in instances of conflicting evidence.**

- Carcinogenicity, mutagenicity, teratogenicity and growth changes, modified reproductive functions, neurotoxicity, contact reactions (skin, eyes), allergic reactions, and hypersensitivity are possible health outcomes of pesticides in humans
- Evidence on human health impacts of cosmetic pesticide use is minimal but limited investigation has been done especially in regards to infants and pregnant women
- Dose, exposure, age at exposure and the health of the exposed play a significant role in the interface between health outcomes and pesticides.
- Experts in the field are in disagreement regarding safe levels of exposure and outcomes of exposure.

Given this information, and adopting the precautionary principle, we support that use of pesticides be controlled in such a way to reduce the potential of negative health outcomes in our population.

**The substitution principle should be considered where competing options exist and one is potentially less hazardous.**

- This principle was adopted by Sweden (1973) and the EU (1998)
- It involves the replacement (or reduction) of hazardous substances in products and processes with less hazardous (or non-hazardous) substances or processes
- Substitutes should achieve an equivalent functionality.

Given this information, and comparable outcomes using non-pesticide integrated pest management, we support the application of the substitution principle to reduce cosmetic use of pesticides.

**In keeping with a need to balance individual rights and interests with that of the community as a whole ("communitarian ethic"), support should be given where the majority of the public have expressed desires to reduce risk for health.**

- The majority of Canadians are concerned about health effects of pesticides
- The majority of Canadians believe lawns should look good
- More Canadians support restrictions on utilization of pesticides than oppose them.
- Communities using bylaws, education and outreach to decrease their pesticide use were more successful (51-90% reduction) than communities who used education and outreach alone (10-24% reduction).

Given this information, and following communitarian ethic, we support initiatives, legislations and/or bylaws that address the concerns Canadians have regarding their health and the use of pesticides.