



WHAT'S THE PEDIATRIC ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH SPECIALTY UNIT (PEHSU) PROGRAM?

We are an interconnected system of specialists located throughout North America who respond to questions from public health professionals, clinicians, policy makers, and the public about children's environmental health concerns. The PEHSU Network provides a credible, academic, non-commercial source of health information and clinical expertise regarding environmental toxins and their effects on children. The PEHSU Network helps people and communities with health-related decision-making; for example, to know when testing for a toxin or chemicals (in air, water, and soil) might be useful. We can make recommendations for blood and urine testing.

WHAT'S THE ECONOMIC BURDEN OF CHILDREN'S ENVIRONMENTAL DISEASE?

Estimated annual costs of environmental contribution to diseases in US children were \$76.6 billion in 2008 (includes lead poisoning, prenatal mercury exposure, childhood cancer, asthma, intellectual disability, autism, and attention deficit hyperactivity disorder).ⁱ

IS THERE A NEED FOR AN ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH RESOURCE FOR HEALTH PROFESSIONALS?

- The Institute of Medicine reports only 6 hours of training in Pediatric Environmental Health for physicians.ⁱⁱ
- While the patient's Poison Control Centers respond to acute toxic exposures, the PEHSU Network has expertise in longer term, lower dose exposures, group exposure messaging (such as an entire childcare center) and what therapeutic interventions may be needed.
- The PEHSU Network partners closely with local, state, and federal agencies and non-profit professional organizations in carrying out this work.

WHAT DO PEOPLE ASK ABOUT?

By providing education and consultations, the PEHSU Network responds to a variety of environmental health topics including:

- School-related hazards
- Indoor air contamination at home
- Adolescent work place exposures
- Hazards of living near toxic waste sites
- Daycare and preschool hazards
- Inquiries about potential toxins, such as residential pesticides, childhood lead, well water contamination

The 5 top exposure concerns based on inquiries from 2007 to 2011 were:

- lead poisoning
- fungus/mold
- mercury
- pesticides
- phthalates/Bisphenol A

(over)



HOW MANY PEOPLE ASK PEHSU'S FOR ADVICE?

People contact the PEHSU Network over 1,200 times annually. This resulted in over 12,500 consultations between 2007 and 2011.

WHAT ELSE DOES THE PEHSU NETWORK DO?

- **Educating via the internet.** In FY2011 (October 2010 to September 2011), there were more than 54,000 hits on the PEHSU Network national website with users accessing a variety of factsheets and other educational materials. The most popular factsheets viewed were Bisphenol A (for the lay community) and hydraulic fracturing (for health professionals).
- **Training current health professionals.** In FY2011, the PEHSU Network of experts educated 40,000 health professionals and almost 28,000 community members by conducting over 1000 activities.
- **Training the next generation of specialists.** In FY2011, the PEHSU network educated over 3,000 clinical trainees and over 900 health sciences college students.
- **Working with reporters.** PEHSU specialists are frequently called upon by the media. Media stories to which the PEHSU Network contributed in 2012 included information on arsenic in rice, dangers of recreational drugs called "bath salts," concerns about candy-like laundry detergent pods, and safe return of children to areas affected by Superstorm Sandy.

DOES THE PEHSU NETWORK MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

- **An economical way to help protect children's health.** The national PEHSU Network annual funding is less than 0.003% of the annual estimated cost of children's environmental disease in the U.S.
- This program is a critical component in the development of healthcare professionals who are better prepared to recognize, treat, and prevent toxic environmental exposures in children.

HOW DO I GET IN TOUCH WITH THE PEHSU NETWORK?

- WEBSITE: www.pehsu.net
- TELEPHONE: 1-888- 347-AOEC (2632)

ⁱ Trasande L, Liu Y. Reducing the staggering costs of environmental disease in children, estimated at \$76.6 billion in 2008. *Health Aff (Millwood)*. 2011 May;30(5):863-70. Epub 2011 May 4. PubMed PMID: 21543421.

ⁱⁱ Pope AM, Rall DP, eds. *Environmental Medicine: Integrating a Missing Element into Medical Education*. Washington, DC: National Acad Press, 1995. (IOM report)

This material was supported by the Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics (AOEC) and funded under the cooperative agreement award number 1U61TS000118-04 from the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR).

Acknowledgement: The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) supports the PEHSU by providing funds to ATSDR under Inter-Agency Agreement number DW-75-92301301-0. Neither EPA nor ATSDR endorse the purchase of any commercial products or services mentioned in PEHSU publications.