PA DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH’S RESPONSE TO PEDIATRIC CANCERS OCCURRING IN SWPA

On October 7, the PA Department of Health (DOH) held a public meeting in the Canon-McMillan school district to discuss the DOH’s findings that the cases of the disease in the district did not constitute a cancer cluster. Community members were upset that only three of the six cases of Ewing sarcoma in the district were considered, and that the DOH was unable to address their concerns regarding exposure to shale gas development. Approximately 250 cases of Ewing sarcoma are diagnosed each year in the United States.

Over 200 people attended the meeting. No move is being made by state DOH at this time to investigate the increased incidence of pediatric cancers in the region in relation to environmental exposure to industrial pollution.

EHP held a press conference prior to the community meeting. You can view raw footage from WPXI (press conference and meeting) HERE, or read a synopsis of the meeting by Statelmpact PA HERE. Additional coverage can be found on EHP’s PRESS page.

A community meeting hosted by EHP to address concerns within the community was held in June. Previous letters exchanged between DOH and EHP were covered in EHP’s August HCP newsletter, or can be found on EHP’s press page under Public Statements and Testimony.

Rather than asking whether a statistical cluster of cancers exists, something that’s always very difficult to identify, the DOH should be asking first whether a plausible link can be made between the diagnosed cancers and potential cancer-causing agents. …..

Given this epidemic in cancers and a possible link to environmental causes, the DOH should next ask: What steps can we take to cut off likely pathways of exposure to these carcinogens? How can we make people safer?

Sarah Rankin, MPH, BSN, OCN
Letter to the Editor, Observer-Reporter, October 13, 2018

Read our current blog post, Shale Gas Development and childhood Cancer: Should I Worry About My Kids? We include advice for what parents can do to protect their families, much of which may be useful to you in your practice.

WATER AT RISK

Shale gas development waste and chemicals have impacted both ground and surface water in PA. Many chemicals in use by the industry are known toxins. Many have yet to be tested for human toxicity. Both private and public water sources may be affected. For an example of how such toxins - including radioactive materials - are entering the water supply, see:

Pennsylvania is Discharging Radioactive Fracking Waste into Rivers as Landfill Leachate, Impacting the Chesapeake Bay & Ohio River Watersheds
by Joshua B. Pribanic and Talia Wiener for Public Herald edited by Melissa Troutman
August 7, 2019 | Project: Smoking Gun | Podcast: newsCOUP

EHP’s Medical Toolkit contains a Survey for Patients’ Potential Exposure and ATSDR’s Exposure History Form. If you suspect that your patient may be experiencing symptoms related to environmental exposure, you may want to inquire about their source of drinking water and proximity to shale gas development infrastructure and municipal waste sites.
UPCOMING SHALE GAS AND PUBLIC HEALTH EVENTS

2019 SHALE & PUBLIC HEALTH CONFERENCE

Tuesday November 19, 2019 | 9 AM to 5 PM | registration starts at 8:30 AM

University of Pittsburgh University Club | 123 University Place, Pittsburgh 15260

Presented by the League of Women Voters of Pennsylvania
Hosted by the University of Pittsburgh Graduate School of Public Health

Featuring new 2019 research:

- Lisa McKenzie, PhD, MPH: Congenital heart defects and intensity of oil and gas well site activity in early pregnancy
- Lee Ann Hill, MPH: PSE Healthy Energy’s examination of how Oil and Gas Waste Management in Pennsylvania has been handled from 1991-2017
- Joan A. Casey, PhD, of Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health: Unconventional natural gas development, maternal anxiety and depression during pregnancy, and birth outcomes in Pennsylvania
- and more
  - Justin Nobel, journalist for Rolling Stone and other publications, on radioactive waste
  - Nicole Deziel, PhD, MHS, principal investigator for the Yale Drinking WATER study
  - Tara McAlexander, PhD, MPH, Postdoctoral Fellow, Drexel School of Public Health, on results from research on unconventional natural gas development, heart failure hospitalizations, and the BNP biomarker
  - Michael McCawley, PhD, West Virginia University, on compressor station emissions and health

Information on lunch and hotel bookings can be found online. REGISTER HERE

PENNSYLVANIA HEALTH CHECK-UP

November 18, 2019 | 9 AM to Noon
501 N 3rd St, Room #418, Harrisburg, PA 17120
2.5 CME credits

Presented by PSR Pennsylvania

Join us for an informative and innovative morning as part of the Physicians for Social Responsibility of Pennsylvania’s speed-learning series regarding the health impacts of the unconventional gas development industry. Light breakfast and lunch included. You can also participate remotely. REGISTER HERE

Videos from the Health Check-up Series are available from:
- Erie on July 13, 2019
- Pittsburgh/Philadelphia on October 13, 2018
Researchers see an association between unconventional natural gas development and sinus problems, migraines, and fatigue in Pennsylvania primary care clinic patients.

Researchers see an association between shale gas development and birth outcomes including low birth weight and small for gestational age.

**SHALE GAS and OIL HEALTH REGISTRY**

If your patients are living in proximity to shale gas development and are experiencing symptoms that are not easily explained, and perhaps episodic, the cause may be related to environmental exposure to airborne or waterborne shale gas pollution. EHP has resources for your patients to track their symptoms and advice on limiting external environmental exposure within the home.

In addition, if the patient lives within 5 miles of shale gas development, they can take part in EHP’s national Health Registry. EHP has resources available to help people register and can provide your office with Health Registry postcards for your patients.
If you are interested in seeing the extent of shale gas infrastructure on the ground in Washington County and speaking to impacted residents, consider attending a Frack Land Tour. Lois Bjornson, member of Clean Air Council and resident of Washington County, takes groups on tour to better understand the public health impacts of living in proximity to shale gas development. Dr. Ned Ketyer, a pediatrician and frequent speaker on the tour, presents health risks of living in proximity to shale gas development. Contact Ms. Bjornson at LoisBjornson@gmail.com to sign up for a tour.

The Southwest Pennsylvania Environmental Health Project (EHP) is a nonprofit public health organization that assists and supports residents of Southwestern Pennsylvania and beyond who believe their health has been, or could be, impacted by shale gas development (fracking).

Services offered by EHP
- Medical ToolKit – Screening & Assessment Tools – Reference Materials
- CME/CEU Credits
- National Shale Gas & Oil Health Registry
- Latest health studies related to shale gas development

EHP defends public health in the face of oil and gas development.
We provide frontline communities with timely monitoring, interpretation and guidance.
We engage diverse stakeholders: health professionals, researchers, community organizers, public servants, and others.
Because knowledge protects health.