A Partner Perspective

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The Ostrich and the OBGYN: A Look at Reproductive Health and the Environment

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2015
GOAL: Highlight how environmental medicine is being advanced in primary care practice and the role that ATSDR plays with its partners in health care!
I have no conflicts of interest to declare.
Lead in Lipstick
Medical Providers do not discuss environmental impacts on health because:

A. The research is lacking
B. We are not comfortable with the topic
C. There are no data to support the topic historically
D. We have more important topics to discuss
E. We follow the ostrich approach: we hide our heads unless we can give a full and complete answer, or solve the problem
F. We really are unaware that there is a problem
   — We do, we just have not realized it (blood sugar, hypertension)
What is “The Environment”? 
“ENVIRONMENT” Includes:

- Industrial chemicals
- Agricultural chemicals
- Physical agents (heat, radiation)
- By-products of combustion and industrial processes (dioxin)
- Foods and nutrients
- Prescription drugs
- Lifestyle choices and substance abuse
- Social and economic factors
Should We Be Concerned?

- **Testicular Cancer**
  - Age adjusted incidence per 10,000 population

- **Breast Cancer**
  - Age adjusted incidence per 10,000 population

- **Hypospadias**
  - Rate per 10,000 births

- **Sperm Count**
  - Count (×10^6/ml)
  - Year: 1920, '40, '60, '80, 2000

*Dr. Birnbaum: NIEHS, Sharpe and Irvine, 2004*
Should We Be Concerned?

**Increase in Diabetes (1980-2010)**

**Increase in Autism Prevalence**

**Increase in Asthma**

**Increase in ADHD**

*Dr. Birnbaum: NIEHS, Data from CDC / National Center for Health Statistics*
We have forgotten the history

- Diethylstilbestrol in the 1950’s
- Methyl mercury in the 1960’s

...And Endocrine Disruptors of the twenty-first century
Pharmaceuticals must show efficacy and safety *prior to* exposing humans

Manufactured chemicals need to show evidence of harm *prior to removing human exposure*

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All exposures are not created equal

Women of reproductive age with occupational exposure to toxic chemicals are highly vulnerable to adverse reproductive health outcomes.
Reproductive Health Professionals

Environmental Exposures

Exposure to Toxic Environmental Agents

ABSTRACT: Reducing exposure to toxic environmental agents is a critical area of intervention for obstetricians, gynecologists, and other reproductive health care professionals. Patient exposure to toxic environmental chemicals and other stressors is ubiquitous, and preconception and prenatal exposure to toxic environmental agents can have long-lasting effects on reproductive health across the life course. Prenatal exposure to certain chemicals has been linked to an increased risk of cancer in childhood, adult male exposure to pesticides is linked to altered semen quality, and environmental factors have been identified as contributing to the development of prostate cancer. Occupational and environmental factors can interfere with all developmental stages of pregnancy, and postnatal exposure to some pesticides can interfere with the development of children. This Committee Opinion reviews the role of environmental factors in reproductive health and offers guidance on how to approach this issue in the context of patient care.
Recommendation 1: Advocate for policies to prevent exposure to toxic environmental chemicals

Recommendation 2: Work to ensure a healthy food system for all

Recommendation 3: Make environmental health part of health care

Recommendation 4: Champion environmental justice
International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics opinion on reproductive health impacts of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals

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Abstract

Exposure to toxic environmental chemicals during pregnancy and breastfeeding is ubiquitous and impacts healthy human reproduction. There are tens of thousands of chemicals in global commerce that can impact reproductive health. Exposure to toxic chemicals during pregnancy can trigger adverse health consequences. Environmental chemicals and related pregnancy outcomes are disproportionately distributed by race, socioeconomic status, and other social factors. Pregnancy-related exposure to these chemicals can result in adverse health outcomes, including changes in fetal and pregnancy outcomes. The global environment is changing rapidly, and there is growing concern about how exposure to environmental chemicals affects human health.

The International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) has issued a position statement on the reproductive health impacts of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals. The statement emphasizes the need for increased research and awareness of the potential health effects of these chemicals on reproductive health. FIGO encourages health professionals and policymakers to take action to reduce exposure to toxic environmental chemicals and promote healthy environments for all individuals.

FIGO has endorsed this position statement and supports the efforts of FIGO and other international organizations to raise awareness and address the health implications of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals.
Ob-gyns don’t need to be experts in environmental health to provide useful information to patients. However, they should:

- Be familiar with their geographic area
- Take an exposure history early
- Provide information about how the food system affects health
- Communicate the science and areas of uncertainties about environmental exposures
Our Vision

- Open the “environmental equivalent” of *Drugs in Pregnancy and Lactation*
- Have an easy on-line resource, click on bisphenol a and see what to recommend
- Clinicians to KNOW to ask about exposures
Reproductive Health and the Environment

- PEHSU: Pediatric and Reproductive Health
- ATSDR: partnering with leaders in OBGYN, occupational medicine
- The Endocrine Society
- ACOG
- FIGO: international work group
Questions?
Please enter questions in the chat box.

Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry
4770 Buford Highway NE, Atlanta, GA 30341
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The fifth and final installment of this webinar series will be **December 17, 2015 at 1:30 pm**

**Working with Tribal Communities**

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