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September 1993 / Against the Grain 25
Household Pesticide Use Linked to Childhood Brain Cancer

A recent case-control study published in *Archives of Environmental Contamination and Toxicology* (24:87-92, 1993) has shown a possible link between family pesticide use and childhood brain cancer.

Researchers from the Missouri Department of Health's Division of Chronic Disease Prevention and Promotion and the University of California at Berkeley interviewed the natural mothers of 45 childhood brain cancer cases to determine the extent of household pesticide use from time of pregnancy to the child's cancer diagnosis. There were also two control groups of 85 "friend controls" and 108 "cancer controls."

In comparison to friend controls, significant positive associations between pesticide use and brain cancer were observed for use of pesticides to control nuisance pests in the home, no-pest-strips in the home, pesticides to control termites, a shampoo used for lice, flea collars on pets, diazinon in the garden or orchard, and herbicides to control weeds in the yard. However, small sample sizes, potential recall bias, multiple comparisons, and lack of detailed exposure verification require further research to confirm these findings.

"Although our findings are not conclusive," the authors of the study state, "they are suggestive of an association between childhood brain cancer and several pesticide use situations, product types, and specific products. The results of this study highlight the need for expanded research on the health effects of pesticide use."

Quality of Life in Osteoporosis Patients

Most clinical trials of osteoporosis prevention and treatment have relied on changes in bone mineral density as the primary outcome measure for efficacy because bone density can change with relatively short durations of therapy. But in their recent editorial appearing in *Calcified Tissue International* (53:75-77, 1993), members of The Osteoporosis Quality of Life Study Group urge that clinical trials also measure health-related quality of life (HRQOL).

HRQOL refers to how well an individual functions in daily life and her subjective perception of well-being—including physical, mental, and social function. For example, a medication may improve a biologic indicator (e.g., fewer vertebral fractures), but decrease general function and well-being, perhaps due to an unwanted drug effect that adversely affects overall HRQOL. Furthermore, if several agents prove to be equivalent with respect to bone outcomes, the HRQOL consequences may provide invaluable guidance to physicians and patients in their therapeutic choices for osteoporosis.

Should Children be Allowed in the Delivery Room?

An informal survey in one hospital found that 92% of obstetricians do not allow children in the delivery room. In India, older children are not allowed in the same room with the newborn for 11 days.

Max Sugar, MD, considers the presence of children at delivery in *Adolescent and Pediatric Gynecology* (6:71-74, 1993). From his review of the available literature, there is no support to the premise that a child's viewing of his mother's delivery decreases sibling rivalry and jealousy, promotes bonding, or teaches children about sex and reproduction in a natural way. On the contrary, Dr. Sugar concludes that the labor-delivery scene poses a psychic trauma to the child.

"It is not unheard of for medical students to have an anxiety reaction or feel faint when they first view a delivery," Dr. Sugar says. "If adults are vulnerable to emotional trauma from viewing delivery, it does not take much to consider that children may be as vulnerable, if not more so."
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