Dispatch: Reconciling Inconsistent Findings: BPA Still Contested

By ACSH Staff — September 7, 2010

Despite spending more than a decade of research and millions of dollars, some researchers are not yet satisfied that bisphenol A (BPA) — used to make many plastic products hard and resilient — is safe. In today's *New York Times*, Denise Grady examines [1] the inconsistent research findings regarding BPA's safety. She also reports on the numerous state bans of BPA and the efforts of Sen. Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) to ban its use in baby bottles nationwide through an amendment to an impending food safety bill scheduled for a Senate vote next week.

ACSH's Jeff Stier says the story is balanced but has mixed feelings about it. "On the one hand, we are pleased that Grady wrote:

> Just finding a chemical in people does not mean it is doing any damage, and there is no definitive proof that BPA harms humans. Research in adults has found that higher BPA levels in urine are associated with an increased risk of heart and liver disease, but the studies do not prove cause and effect, because they merely observed correlations, which could have been coincidental.

Continues Stier, "Yet at the same time, when a story is 'balanced,' it is bound to include junk science. But these days, a 'balanced' story is the best we can hope for from *The New York Times*."

ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross says that overall, the story is still more alarmist than science-based. "In the final portion of her article, 'Reconciling Disparate Studies,' Grady quotes a scientist, Dr. Gail Prins, who described herself as at first skeptical that health effects from low-dose animal studies could be replicable, but ultimately decides there are consistent data. Dr. Prins argues that the maxim, 'the dose makes the poison' may not apply to hormonal systems, because hormones can affect the body at low doses. I reject that out of hand; there still has to be a dose-response effect. She's just looking for an excuse to impugn BPA."

The story, however, ends on a positive note. "Dr. Prins' lab is one of ten labs receiving NIH seed grant money that requires the BPA to come from a single source and study health effects exclusively through oral exposure," Dr. Ross says. "Most labs don't do this — they study BPA through injection, which has nothing to do with human exposure. Maybe in a few years, we might actually have some reproducible results about the toxicology of BPA in animals."

Links

[1] http://www.nytimes.com/2010/09/07/science/07bpa.html