

Study linking PFCs and early menopause doesn't pan out

By ACSH Staff — March 25, 2011

Some West Virginia University researchers are frying up a [skillet of fear for pre-menopausal women](#) [1]. Published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology and Metabolism (JCEM)*, a new [study](#) [2] alleges that the perfluorocarbons (PFCs) — referred to as “gender bending chemicals” by U.K. newspaper *Daily Mail* — commonly found in non-stick pans and food packaging may lead to early menopause. The researchers measured PFC levels in blood samples from 26,000 U.S. women over the age of 42 who had already experienced menopause. They found that women with the highest levels of PFCs also had “significantly lower” levels of estrogen — an early sign of menopause.

Based on these results, lead researcher Dr. Sarah Knox concludes that while the study does not prove higher PFC levels actually cause earlier menopause, “There is no doubt there is an association between exposure to PFCs and onset of menopause. Part of the explanation could be that women in these age groups have higher PFC levels because they are no longer losing PFCs with menstrual blood anymore, but it is still clinically disturbing because it would imply increased PFC exposure is the natural result of menopause.”

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom finds this statement to be rather disingenuous. He says, “the authors are clearly implying that PFCs cause menopause by claiming that women with menopause have more PFCs in their blood. But there is an alternate explanation that makes just as much sense: women who have reached menopause are obviously older than those who haven't and have spent more time using non-stick cookware and therefore have had more exposure to the PFCs over their lifetime. This is just as reasonable an explanation for the findings but is downplayed in the article.” He continues, “Anyhow, people eating at my home should be far more worried about my cooking than the pans.”

“This is an atrocious story, both scientifically and journalistically,” laments ACSH's Dr. Gilbert Ross. “Liberally throwing the terms ‘gender-bending’ and ‘hormone-disrupting’ around like a juggler, the writer aims not to inform but to alarm readers. The notion that ‘PFCs...cause hormonal changes’ is a thoroughly baseless assertion. To extrapolate from these findings to even an ‘association’ is scientifically baseless — it would be called malpractice if it were medical care. Everyone involved in publicizing this study should be ashamed — *Daily Mail*, *JCEM* and the authors.”

ACSH's Dr. Elizabeth Whelan is astonished that this study was published at all. “It gives peer-reviewed journals a bad name. So now we need to fear our cookware as a threat to our health?”

Outrageous!"

COPYRIGHT © 1978-2016 BY THE AMERICAN COUNCIL ON SCIENCE AND HEALTH

Source URL: <https://www.acsh.org/news/2011/03/25/study-linking-pfcs-and-early-menopause-doesnt-pan-out>
Links

[1] <http://www.dailymail.co.uk/health/article-1369366/Gender-bending-chemicals-saucepans-linked-early-menopause.html>

[2] <http://jcem.endojournals.org/cgi/content/abstract/jc.2010-2401v1>