

Good and bad plastic news

By ACSH Staff — April 20, 2011

In a comprehensive review of bisphenol A (BPA) published in the journal *Critical Reviews in Toxicology*, the German Society of Toxicology (GST) analyzed about 5,000 studies and [concluded](#) ^[1] that, “[BPA] exposure represents no noteworthy risk to the health of the human population, including newborns and babies.” But this report may come as some surprise to the (unfortunately) very few readers who will learn of it, considering it gained little to no media coverage. As Jon Entine, author of ACSH’s *Scared to Death: How Chemophobia Threatens Public Health* and a scholar with the American Enterprise Institute, points out in his new [op-ed](#) ^[2] “A Toxic Setback for the Anti-Plastic Campaigners,” the media enthusiastically cover findings from scientifically irrelevant or bogus animal studies on the alleged health effects associated with phthalates and BPA *ad nauseum*. Yet, when such a groundbreaking study extensively reviews the BPA literature and confirms that the current tolerable daily intake (TDI) level for the chemical, as set by the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), is justified, we hear crickets from journalists’ news desks. In fact, only FoodProductionDaily.com and *Chemical Watch* reported this story.

What did — predictably — gain significant publicity, however, was a new book by so-called science journalist Susan Freinkel titled *Plastic: A Toxic Love Story*. In an [interview](#) ^[3] for NPR, Freinkel says that even though plastics have had an enormously beneficial impact, they can still interfere with our hormones and endocrine system — even disrupting normal testosterone function. Animal studies have shown, she says, that extremely high doses of DEHP, a phthalate found in vinyl and many medical products and devices, can be toxic to the testicles, creating malformations and damaging sperm that can lead to fertility problems later in life. Ms. Freinkel even “informs” us that, “If you look at a diagram of that molecule [BPA], it looks just like an estrogen molecule,” which is apparently why it’s an “estrogen mimic.”

Thankfully, ACSH’s Dr. Josh Bloom, director of chemical and pharmaceutical sciences, sets the record straight. He even drew us molecular diagrams of the typical structures of estrogen and BPA and showed us that, “her assertion that BPA is just like estrogen is just plain wrong. The structures of these two compounds look nothing alike, no matter how you view them — emblematic of the scientific misinformation replete in this book.” And in keeping with all of the other scientific analyses — as opposed to those designed to sell books or agendas — the new German toxicologists’ study says that BPA research demonstrates “a lack of estrogen-dependent effects.”

“Ms. Freinkel is not a science journalist, she’s just a journalist who uses ‘science-y’ terms to attract your attention, and she’s good at it. Too bad the GST, along with every other scientific body, has found that BPA presents no threat to the environment or human health,” adds ACSH’s Dr. Gilbert Ross. “But activist groups continue to tout their anti-chemical political agendas and like a game of Simon Says, the media reports on this drivel.”

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Links

[1] <http://www.foodproductiondaily.com/Quality-Safety/No-significant-risks-from-bisphenol-A-say-German-toxicological-experts>

[2] <http://www.american.com/archive/2011/april/a-toxic-setback-for-the-anti-plastic-campaigners>

[3] <http://www.npr.org/2011/04/19/135245835/our-toxic-love-hate-relationship-with-plastics>