

Survey of Ob. docs fails to find many who discuss chemicals with moms-to-be

By ACSH Staff — July 1, 2014



A survey sent to thousands of regional Ob-Gyns by a group

from the Dept. of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of California-San Francisco revealed an [intense lack of concern](#) ^[1] among those specialists about environmental chemicals as impacting their pregnant patients.

The authors, led by Dr. Naomi E. Stotland, sent out a 64-question survey to over 20,000 California FACOGs (Fellows of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists), and got usable responses from a little more than 2,500 (a response rate of about 13 percent). What they discovered was that well under 20 percent of the responders counselled their pregnant patients about the various toxic chemicals they might be exposed to in their home environments, and what stratagems to employ to avoid or reduce them.

Several news articles about the survey took the point of view that the problem here is that doctors taking care of pregnant women are not sufficiently up-to-date on the extent or degree of toxic exposures women are encountering, and the tragic consequences for their precious babies-in-development. Huffington Post's Lynne Peeples waxed [positively melodramatic](#) ^[2] with concern over the future of our nation, given the lax attitude of Ob's towards this expanding threat (no pun intended). She basically accused America's docs of abandoning their pregnant patients by not warning them of these exposures. She cites the Environmental Working Group's free pregnancy guide that covers several toxin-avoiding steps as a resource for women who may come to believe that their own obstetrician is not adequately trained, when compared to the experts at EWG! (She noted that EWG recently published a critique of the FDA and the EPA regarding their advisories to women about fish consumption!).

Even the [Health blog of Fox News](#) ^[3] got in on the action: their columnist focused on the seemingly-lax attitude of the FACOGs with respect to phthalates, BPA and pesticides, especially those used around the home.

ACSH's Dr. Josh Bloom says, Perhaps the real reason why obstetricians are not concerned with warning expectant mothers about toxic chemicals is because there is nothing to worry about. This

sounds just like run of the mill phony scare tactics that groups like EWG use all the time. But when they throw in attention-getting topics like pregnancy, they can be even more effective in scaring people about nothing. They are nothing if not efficient.

ACSH s Dr. Gil Ross had this perspective: The mom-to-be docs surveyed certainly discussed known and even evidence-based suspected chemical risks with their concerned patients. Those included alcohol, lead paint and dust, unpasteurized dairy products such as cheese, mercury in certain types of fish, and cigarettes, both smoking and second-hand smoke. I perceive the survey thusly: the Ob-Gyns, rather than being uninformed about these chemical threats simply chose based on knowledge and experience not to exacerbate pregnant women s fears and anxiety based on hypothetical and nonsensical risks . They well know that pregnant women worry about a lot of things, and decided not to add minuscule concerns that would likely snowball into avoidance behaviors, completely unnecessarily. I'd surely take their advice over the 'experts' at chemophobia central, EWG! Wouldn't you?"

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[1]

<http://www.plosone.org/article/info%3Adoi%2F10.1371%2Fjournal.pone.0098771;jsessionid=E1B16A890D78250DA2E>

[2] http://www.huffingtonpost.com/2014/06/25/pregnancy-environment-health-toxic-chemicals-doctors_n_5529522.html

[3] <http://www.foxnews.com/health/2014/06/26/pregnant-women-may-lack-info-on-household-toxins/>