

Pesticides Pose a Lifelong Threat

To the Editor:

"Pesticides May Leave Legacy of Hormonal Chaos" (Science Times, Aug. 23) implies that evidence on the endocrine disruptive effects of some synthetic pollutants is recent, and you cite claims that such effects are exaggerated.

There is, however, substantial evidence from the 1950's on the hormonal effects of chlorinated pesticides. And while synthetics are less potent than natural estrogens, they are still likely to pose significant reproductive hazards to wildlife and humans.

Exposures begin prenatally and in infancy, when levels of natural estrogens are low and sensitivity is high. The effects are lifelong and cumulative, in view of their stability and concentration in body fat. These synthetic pollutants are not blocked by estrogen-binding blood proteins, and thus they can more easily reach and attach to receptor sites.

Finally, the synthetic pollutants can increase the sensitivity of breast tissue to subsequent carcinogenic exposure. SAMUEL S. EPSTEIN, M.D.
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Chicago, Aug. 24, 1994

Experts for Hire?

To the Editor:

In "Pesticides May Leave Legacy of Hormonal Chaos" (Science Times, Aug. 23), you present a member of the American Council on Science and Health as an expert on the issue of whether or not chemicals in the environment harm wildlife and humans.

According to an article in the May issue of Consumer Reports magazine,

"The ACSH: Forefront of Science, or Just a Front?" the American Council on Science and Health has received a major portion of its funds from the chemical industry, including American Cyanamid, Chevron, Dow USA, Du Pont, Monsanto, Union Carbide and Uniroyal.

In one in-house memo, Elizabeth Whelan, president of the organization, defined it as "the great defender of petrochemical companies."

It's not surprising that the American Council on Science and Health would claim reports of environmental damage from chemicals to be "a lot



Milan Trenc

of baloney." Is it true that industry financing compromises any claim to scientific independence? I believe that it does.

JAMES HAHN

Arlington, Va., Aug. 24, 1994

The writer is co-founder of the Alliance for Nontoxic Living and Environmental Responsibility.