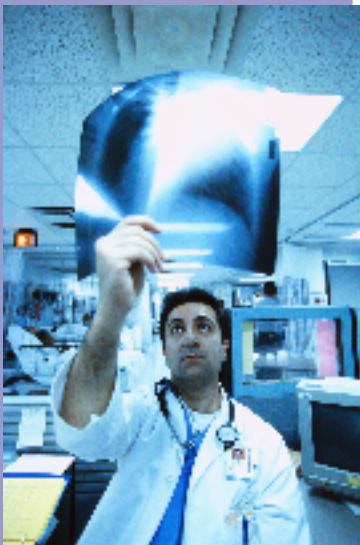


*Scientific Study****Environmental Causes of Disease Often Missed by Doctors***

“It is crucial, if not critical, to public health that environmental correlates are considered in the face of otherwise unexplained symptoms.”



Our environment is becoming increasingly more polluted. Chemical toxicants are nearly impossible to avoid with daily exposure to our own fragrances, personal care products, pesticides, plastics, rubber, glues, office equipment, flame retardants, and a myriad of chemicals that is increasingly called “toxic soup”. Even those who choose safer, less toxic products are forcibly exposed to the fragrances and chemicals of neighbors, coworkers, fellow students, and others around them.

Unexplained illnesses seem to be increasing in leaps and bounds and include autism, SIDS, fibromyalgia, chronic fatigue syndrome, and multiple chemical sensitivity. Many have been linked to the environment, yet the connection is largely overlooked.

Genuis, a researcher in the Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology at the University of Alberta, Canada, confirms “Environmental causes for familiar medical problems are frequently undiagnosed; it is recommended that, where appropriate, a screening tool for evaluation of environmental exposure to toxics be incorporated into primary care assessment and management of patients.”

Genuis’s statement was the result of a patient complaining of depression, emotional instability and various physical symptoms which revealed no objective and diagnosable abnormality.

More new health conditions are emerging that cannot be explained by

conventional medical wisdom. Yet all of these ailments have been linked to environmental exposures. This link is repeatedly missed by doctors. All too frequently a “garbage pail” diagnosis of anxiety or depression is given while patients’ conditions deteriorate.

As it turned out, Genuis’s patient was a hairdresser whose neuropsychiatric symptoms were the result of occupational exposure to hazardous chemicals such as those commonly found in hair spray, lotions, shampoo, and conditioner. After a leave of absence from her position, she was no longer exposed to occupational chemicals and reported cessation of her symptoms. Armed with the knowledge to practice exposure avoidance, the patient was able to regain her life.

In most conventional medical establishments, the patient would have been placed in a managed care situation in which her symptoms were merely managed with various pharmacological drugs while she was taught coping skills and cognitive behavioral therapy and continued to suffer.

Genuis hit the nail on the head. It is crucial, if not critical, to public health that environmental correlates are considered in the face of otherwise unexplained symptoms.

Reference

Genuis, SJ, Genuis, SK. Human Exposure Assessment and Relief From Neuropsychiatric Symptoms: Case Study of a Hairdresser. *J Am Board Fam Pract.* 2004;17:136–41.