

RISK COMMUNIQUÉ

Pesticide Warnings

The July 2005 issue of JAMA, the Journal of the American Medical Association, includes an article warning of the rising incidence of acute illnesses associated with pesticide exposure at schools. Pesticides continue to be used on many school properties, and some rural schools are exposed to pesticide drifts from neighboring farms.

The JAMA study found that incidence rates for the 1998-2002 were 7.4 cases per million children and 27.3 cases per million school employee full time equivalents. *The incidence rates for children increased significantly during this period.* Most illnesses were associated with insecticides (35%), disinfectants (32%), repellents (13%), or herbicides (11%). Sixty-nine percent of the illnesses were associated with pesticides used at schools and 31% were associated with drift exposure from farmland.

The authors of the study recommend that in order to prevent pesticide-related illnesses in schools, integrated pest management programs should be set up, practices to reduce pesticide drift should be followed, and pesticide spray buffer zones around schools should be established. The JAMA article can be accessed at <http://jama.ama-assn.org>.