Mind, Disrupted Tests for Toxins Among Learning and Developmental Disabilities Community

First-Ever Biomonitoring Project Finds Dozens of Neurotoxic Chemicals

Washington, D.C. – A new report released today documents toxic chemical pollution in the bodies of people from the learning and developmental disabilities community.

Twelve Americans volunteered for the Mind, Disrupted Biomonitoring Project to explore the question of how the chemicals all around us — and in our bodies — may be linked to learning and developmental problems such as those directly experienced by the study participants, their children or grandchildren.

“The overwhelming evidence shows that certain environmental exposures can contribute to lifelong learning and developmental disorders,” explains Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, Science Director for the Science and Environmental Health Network and Board Member for Pesticide Action Network (PAN). “We should eliminate children’s exposures to substances that we know can have these impacts by implementing stronger health-based policies requiring safer alternatives.”

The set of chemicals studied are found in everything from baby bottles to frying pans, computers and children’s toys to the vegetables served with dinner. They are known or suspected to be neurotoxicants, hazardous to nerve cells, or endocrine disruptors with the potential to alter normal hormone function.

The report released today by the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative, Mind, Disrupted: How toxic chemicals may affect how we think and who we are, summarizes results of the study: All 12 participants tested positive for at least 26 of the 89 tested chemicals. Overall, 61 toxic chemicals were present in the bodies the study participants.

“The fact that these chemicals are present in the people tested doesn’t necessarily mean they can be blamed for the developmental problems in their families — but it’s certainly a possibility,” says Dr. Margaret Reeves, a Senior Scientist for PAN who has worked closely on biomonitoring projects with the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center, which supported the study. “That possibility should force us to look very hard at the relationship between the chemicals we carry in our bodies and rising rates of autism, attention deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other learning and developmental disabilities.”

All 12 participants had detectable levels of organochlorine pesticides, bisphenol A (BPA), mercury, lead, polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs), perfluorinated compounds (PFCs) and perchlorate in their bodies. Eleven participants had detectable levels of the pesticide triclosan.

The report is being discussed at a Senate Hearing today on public exposure to toxic chemicals, where lawmakers are reviewing the possibility of reforming the national law governing industrial chemicals (the Toxics Substances Control Act). A diverse and growing coalition of more than 120 groups, Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families, is pressing Congress to pass smart federal policies that protect us from toxic chemicals.

The Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative (LDDI) is a national project fostering collaboration among learning and developmental disability organizations, researchers, health professionals and environmental health groups to address concerns about the impact environmental pollutants may have on healthy brain development. LDDI currently has over 450 organizational and individual participants engaged in educational and policy efforts.

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More Information:

For more information and to download the report: www.minddisrupted.org

For information on pesticides and children: http://www.panna.org/pesticidesandchildren

For more information on biomonitoring: http://www.commonweal.org/programs/brc/


For information on federal chemicals policy reform: www.saferchemicals.org

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