

Panel Releases C8 Study on Reproductive Issues

JOHN RABY, Associated Press

CHARLESTON, W.Va. (AP) — Some pregnant women exposed to a chemical while living near a DuPont plant near Parkersburg reported high blood pressure, though there were not enough cases to show a direct link between the two, according to a study released Monday.

A three-member C8 Science Panel released the study in Parkersburg on reproductive issues associated with the chemical, also called perfluorooctanoic acid.

Researchers interviewed 15,000 women from the Mid-Ohio Valley in 2009 and 2010 who had participated in earlier C8 studies and found "suggestive evidence" that pregnancy-related hypertension was associated with increasing levels of C8. However, the trends fell short of being "statistically significant" — the scientific bar for suggesting that the chemical directly caused the high blood pressure.

DuPont said in a statement it doesn't believe C8 causes pregnancy-induced hypertension.

The panel was named in 2005 as part of a settlement of a lawsuit filed by Mid-Ohio Valley residents against DuPont that claimed C8 contaminated water supplies in Ohio and West Virginia. DuPont uses C8 at its Washington Works plant.

If the scientists ultimately conclude there is a "probable link" between C8 and health problems, DuPont could be forced to spend as much as \$235 million on medical monitoring programs.

The panel is expected to issue more comprehensive findings by next July.

Harry Deitzler, one of the lawyers representing the plaintiffs, didn't immediately return a telephone message Monday.

Monday's report didn't find a link between C8 and pre-term birth, low birthweights and miscarriages.

An earlier report issued by the panel found a "small but clearly present" association between C8 and preeclampsia, a condition that can endanger the health of pregnant women and their fetuses by triggering high blood pressure, seizure, stroke and organ failure. Preeclampsia can only be ended by delivery.

Also Monday, the panel released a separate study that found a possible link between C8 and thyroid disease in women. The panel also found that residents' LDL cholesterol levels fell as exposure to the chemical dropped. High LDL cholesterol levels are a known risk factor for cardiovascular disease.

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In July, the panel found that former plant workers who were heavily exposed to C8 had higher death rates from kidney cancer, other kidney diseases and mesothelioma, a rare cancer caused by asbestos exposure. But overall, the death rate among workers was 30 percent lower than the U.S. population.

A separate study of liver function had showed that one of three enzyme markers was elevated, indicating possible damage. But the panel cautioned against linking that to C8 exposure.

DuPont plans to stop making and using C8 by 2015

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Online:

C8 Science Panel: <http://www.c8sciencepanel.org/index.html> [1]

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