

Foreword

Pesticide poisoning in the United States remains under-recognized and under-treated. The lack of attention to pesticide poisoning exists in spite of the ubiquity of pesticides in our homes, workplaces, and communities, and despite the considerable potential for pesticide-related illness and injury. Communities expect that their primary care providers will be prepared to deal with pesticide-related health conditions, as well as other environmental illnesses, but often times they are not.

This document is part of a national initiative aimed at changing the current situation. The *National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiative* has set forth a strategic direction for the nation to improve the recognition, management, and prevention of pesticide-related health conditions. The vision is for all primary health care providers to:

- Possess a basic understanding of the health effects associated with pesticide exposures as well as broader environmental exposures.
- Take action to ameliorate such effects through clinical and prevention activities.

Achieving this vision means incorporating some changes in educational institutions related to the health professions – medical schools, nursing schools, residency, and practicum programs – to equip students better to deal with pesticide-related exposures and health conditions.

These guidelines outline the knowledge and skills that students in the health professions need to have about pesticides. We recognize the challenge that health educational institutions face in terms of incorporating additional content. Nevertheless, it is important to find room for pesticide concerns – both in terms of the very real health threats that they pose, and as a first step in addressing the growing problem of environmental toxins. Medical and nursing schools – and individual faculty members – will of course wish to make their own choices about how and where to incorporate this information in their courses. We hope these guidelines help in that task.

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