

National Environmental Education Foundation

Knowledge to live by

National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiative

FACT SHEET

The Initiative:

The *National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiative* is a project of The National Environmental Education Foundation (NEEF) in partnership with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, and in collaboration with the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, the U.S. Department of Agriculture, and the U.S. Department of Labor, and a wide range of stakeholders. The purpose of the initiative is to improve the recognition, management, and prevention of pesticide poisonings and overexposures by health care providers; this will be accomplished by improving providers' education and practice skills, and by increasing resource linkages. The initiative is a model for integrating other environmental health issues into health care provider education and practice.

The Need:

Although environmental health risks are a leading cause of illness and death, the average health professional receives minimal environmental training. Even when environmental factors are identified as a source of a health problem, there is often little knowledge about how to address or prevent the problem. A study has shown that 75% of medical schools require only about seven hours of study in environmental medicine over four years (1994). (1) During 1994-95, the Institute of Medicine issued specific recommendations to integrate environmental health education into medical and nursing professions. (2,3)

Pesticides are ubiquitous in our society in both urban and agricultural sectors. We use pesticides in our homes, workplaces, and communities. Due to the widespread use of pesticides and the potential for related illness and injury (especially among farm workers, their children, and pesticide handlers), health care providers should be prepared to recognize, manage and prevent pesticide-related health conditions in their patients and communities. Communities expect that their primary care providers will be prepared to deal with pesticide-related health conditions, as well as other environmental-related illnesses, but often they are not.

Target Audience:

Primary Health Care Providers:

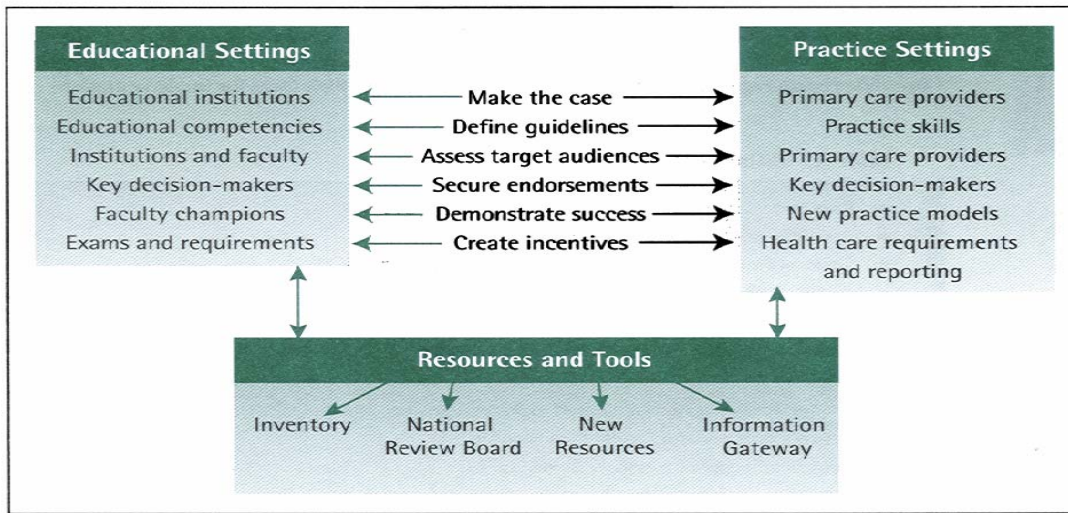
- Physicians
- Nurses
- Nurse Practitioners
- Physician Assistants
- Nurse Midwives
- Community Workers

Decision-making Bodies:

- Curriculum Committees
- Accrediting Institutions
- Administrators
- Residency Review Committees
- Institutions Governing Health Care and Health Practice/Requirements

(over)

Strategic Framework:



Initiative Projects:

The initiative is a long-term, sustained effort with multiple projects planned and underway. Projects in progress include:

- Making the Case for Change in Educational Settings
- Defining Competencies for Curricula
- Assessing Knowledge and Skills of Practitioners
- Reviewing and Evaluating Resources
- National Forum
- Making the Case for Practitioners
- Defining Practice Skills and Guidelines
- Inventory of Existing Resources
- Creating an Information Gateway

For Additional Information:

Visit the Initiative Web site at: <http://www.neefusa.org/health/pesticides/index.htm>
or contact (202) 261-6475, health@neefusa.org

References:

1. Schenk, M., S.M. Popp, A.V. Neale, and R.Y. Demers, 1996. "Environmental medicine content in medical school curricula." *Academic Medicine*, Vol. 71, No. 5, May.
2. Institute of Medicine, 1995. Pope, A.M., M.A. Snyder, and L.H. Mood, eds. *Nursing, Health, & the Environment*, IOM Report, Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.
3. Institute of Medicine, 1995. Pope, A.M., and D.P. Rall, eds. *Environmental Medicine: Integrating a Missing Element into Medical Education*, IOM Report, Division of Health Promotion and Disease Prevention, National Academy Press, Washington, D.C.