

Conclusion

This Implementation Plan is the starting point for a strategic and coordinated effort to change our national health care system so that it adequately addresses the problems posed by pesticide poisonings and exposures. The Implementation Plan presents the goal of the Initiative and the expected outcomes, and sets out the strategic direction to improve the recognition, management and prevention of pesticide-related health conditions. At the heart of the Implementation Plan is a three-pronged strategy for accomplishing the necessary change.

The strategy is aimed at improving the teaching of pesticides and environmental health in educational settings of nursing, medical, and other health professional schools, changing the way primary care providers assess and react to pesticide cases in their practice settings, and creating the necessary new resources for both educational and practice settings that build upon the existing knowledge base and respond to the needs of faculty, students, administrators, and practitioners. The three-pronged strategy and the Implementation Plan as a whole are intended to serve as a model for other toxic exposures and broader efforts to educate health care providers about environmental health problems. It is hoped this Implementation Plan will be a positive step towards a national vision for environmental health awareness, education and training for health care providers.

Work is already underway on a number of components of the Implementation Plan — including development of competency guidelines, establishment of a national evaluation panel/ review board, conducting an audience assessment through literature review and focus groups, and creation of an information gateway. The intention is to get the remaining components underway in the next several years. Evaluation of progress will be an ongoing theme during the course of this Initiative. The next steps in moving this Initiative forward will require the support and participation of a wide spectrum of stakeholders nationwide. This Implementation Plan can be used as a way of introducing new additional stakeholders and interested parties to the Initiative and of involving them in specific components. The Implementation Plan will also be a focus of a National Forum, to be convened in 2002.

As work proceeds, workgroup members and other stakeholders are encouraged to stay active in the Initiative through e-mail, EPA's host website (www.epa.gov/oppfead1/safety/healthcare/healthcare.htm) and NEETF's host website (www.neetf.org/health/providers/index.shtml) and to bring the Initiative to the attention of colleagues and other contacts in the health care world.

