

SCIENCE POLICY COUNCIL INTERIM POSITION ON ENVIRONMENTAL ENDOCRINE DISRUPTION

From: *Special Report on Environmental Endocrine Disruption: An Effects Assessment and Analysis* (EPA Document No. EPA/630/R-96/012, February 1997)

Background

EPA has followed closely the recent reports dealing with the potential effects of environmental endocrine disruptors on human health and ecological well-being. EPA's Science Policy Council requested that the Risk Assessment Forum prepare a Technical Panel report that would provide an overview of the current state of the science relative to endocrine disruption. It is intended that this report serve as an interim assessment to inform Agency risk assessors of the major findings and uncertainties and to serve as a basis for a Science Policy Council position statement.

Science Policy Council's Interim Position

The Environmental Protection Agency is aware of, and concerned about, information indicating the possibility of adverse impacts on human health and the environment associated with exposure to endocrine disruptors. At the present time, however, there is little knowledge of or agreement on the extent of the problem. Based on the current state of the science, the Agency does not consider endocrine disruption to be an adverse endpoint per se, but rather to be a mode or mechanism of action potentially leading to other outcomes, for example, carcinogenic, reproductive or developmental effects, routinely considered in reaching regulatory decisions. Evidence of endocrine disruption alone can influence priority setting for further testing and the assessment of the results of this testing could lead to regulatory action if adverse effects are shown to occur. This position could change as additional data become available on the mechanisms and role of endocrine disruptors.

The Agency thinks that identification of environmental agents which cause adverse effects as a result of endocrine disruption as well as enhancement of our understanding of how these agents exert their effects will improve EPA's ability to reduce or prevent risks, particularly to children and vulnerable ecosystems. These considerations become increasingly important as we expand our risk assessment activities to incorporate a wider range of susceptible populations, multiple pathways of exposure and mixtures of chemical substances.

Further research and testing are needed to address existing gaps in knowledge concerning the consequences of endocrine disruption. Such knowledge will reduce uncertainties in the assessment of hazard, exposure and risk. The Agency is working with other Federal agencies, as well as academic, international and industry groups to expand the body of defensible and credible information and data on this issue. Several major activities are underway that address these needs. Some of these are listed below.

Examples of activities:

1. EPA is co-sponsoring the detailed review and interpretation of the existing literature on endocrine disruption currently underway at the National Academy of Sciences' National Research Council. This study is expected to be completed later this year;
2. EPA has developed, and is implementing, a multi-year endocrine disruptors research strategy;
3. EPA chairs the workgroup convened by the President's Office of Science and Technology Policy tasked to document, and then coordinate, research on endocrine disruptors across the federal government. Also this activity serves as the basis for pursuing coordination of research on an international level;
4. Under the mandates of the Food Quality Protection Act (FQPA) of 1996 and the 1996 amendments to the Safe Drinking Water Act (SDWA), EPA has established an advisory committee to assist in developing a screening and testing strategy for evaluating chemicals for their potential to cause effects via endocrine disruption. The FQPA requires that the strategy be developed and peer reviewed within two years, implemented during the third year, and that a progress report be submitted to the Congress by the end of the fourth year.

EPA continues to stay abreast of scientific developments, and will take regulatory action whenever sound scientific information and prudent public policy dictate. We are currently committed to pursuing domestic and international opportunities for exposure/risk reduction related to endocrine disruptors.