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More Recent Studies on Fragrances

In response to Curtis (2004), I would like to cite more recent studies by researchers at the Research Institute for Fragrance Materials, Inc. (RIFM) that address the health and environmental effects of fragrances.

The RIFM strives to be the international leader for the safe use of fragrance ingredients (Balk et al. 2004; Bickers et al. 2003a; Cadby et al. 2002b; Smith 2003) and has ongoing research programs in the areas of fragrance allergy, human health effects (Cadby et al. 2002a; Bickers et al. 2003b), respiratory safety (Isola et al. 2004; Smith et al. 2004), and environmental impact (Salvito et al. 2002, 2004). The RIFM's comprehensive, logical, and documented research methods are modeled after the National Academy of Sciences' (NRC) Elements of Risk Assessment and Risk Management (NRC 1994).

Research is prioritized (Ford et al. 2000) and designed using information in the RIFM proprietary database (RIFM 2004) and according to the needs of the scientific community and the general public. The database provides a clearinghouse for human health and environmental studies, as well as basic material information, and is maintained by continuously monitoring journals, government reports, company-sponsored research, and available literature to enable analysis of documented conclusions.

All available information pertaining to the safety of fragrance materials, study protocols, and results are reviewed by an independent international panel of scientific and medical experts from the fields of toxicology, dermatology, pathology, and environmental science. Research results and safety evaluations are published in peer-reviewed scientific journals and presented at professional meetings.

In addition, the RIFM accepts proposals for sponsored scientific research and will work jointly with interested third parties to further knowledge on health and environmental issues.

The author is employed by the Research Institute for Fragrance Materials; he declares that the RIFM publishes its work in the peer-reviewed literature under the guidance of an independent scientific panel and receives support from the private sector.

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Pesticides and Organic Agriculture

I read with horror the article “Pesticides and Parkinson Disease” by Renee Twombly (2004) in which she implied that rotenone is “often used in organic gardening and farming.” She went on to describe the effects of rotenone and the even more harmful effects of pyridaben, which is far more toxic than rotenone, both of which are used in conventional agriculture.

To set the record straight, rotenone is not commonly used in organic agriculture. Rotenone that has been naturally derived is listed as a “restricted substance” by the Organic Materials Review Institute (OMRI 2004) and may be used only in special circumstances with designated limitations. Meanwhile, rotenone's synergist, piperonyl butoxide, is prohibited from use in organic agriculture.

The premise of organic agriculture is to fortify the soil through wholesome, nontoxic means, thereby strengthening the ability of plants to defy diseases and pests.

It is the hope of the hardworking pioneers in the organic movement that the instance of Parkinson disease, cancer, and many environmentally related illnesses will diminish exponentially with the conversion of acreage to organic cultivation.

The author declares she has no competing financial interests.

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Editor's response: As DiMatteo implies, rotenone is, or should be, used only as a last resort in organic gardening and farming. It should be noted, however, that this pesticide is commonly marketed and sold under the rubric “organic gardening supplies.”

Agricultural Task Not Predictive of Children's Exposure to OP Pesticides

Coronado et al. (2004) reported that the agricultural task of plant thinning by adults was associated with higher urinary pesticide metabolite concentrations in children. Their analysis was based on data from a 1999 study of farmworkers in the Yakima