

Abstract Category: Community Outreach

**Mammary Gland Carcinogens and Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals Should Be Disclosed on Personal Care and Cleaning Product Labels**

Zoe Schacht-Levine, Great Neck Breast Cancer Coalition, Aliyah Cohen, Huntington Breast Cancer Action Coalition, Silent Spring Institute

Collaborating with two Long Island breast cancer coalitions, Silent Spring Institute offered internships for two Long Island High School students. The Silent Spring Institute is developing recommendations to help consumers select products to reduce exposures to chemicals that can affect breast cancer risk, including mammary gland carcinogens and endocrine disruptors. The purpose of our summer research project was to determine if it is possible for an average consumer to follow the Institute's selection criteria for personal care and cleaning products relying only on ingredient labels.

After visiting two stores, one being conventional and one alternative, we analyzed over 300 product labels. Notes were taken regarding the price, which ingredients were on the criteria list, and eco-claims made by the manufacturer. We collected and analyzed the data in Excel, quantifying differences between the alternative and conventional products, and noting challenges we encountered in applying the criteria.

We found that not all products in conventional stores are less expensive than those found in alternative stores. Also, just because a product is advertised as alternative, it doesn't mean that the product meets the criteria. The same holds true for conventional products in that some products marketed towards the more conventional shoppers may meet the criteria and have a significantly lower exposure rate when compared to an "alternative" product. These and additional comparisons are important to consumer education and may lead to limiting exposure to harmful chemicals.

We found it very challenging for the average consumer to follow the criteria list. Ingredient labels tended to present misleading eco-claims. Manufacturers also neglected to disclose all ingredients because there are no regulating laws. As a result, consumers are left uncertain of the product's contents. It took about five minutes to collect data from each label, while the average consumer typically does not have time to research each purchase.

The following federal policies should be implemented and enforced to assist consumers: 1) disclosure of all ingredients on product labels, 2) labels must identify ingredients as carcinogenic or endocrine disruptors, and 3) manufacturers may not falsely market products as "eco- safe" or "natural".

If producers of personal care and cleaning products did not neglect to disclose all ingredients to the consumer and carried out safety tests for their products, the health of the general public would improve as exposure rates to mammary gland carcinogens and endocrine disrupting chemicals diminish.