# Today’s piece was prepared by Lauren Poull, MD and based on an article in The SF Gate, titled "Autism risk seen in mothers' pesticide exposure.”

# <http://www.sfgate.com/health/article/Autism-risk-seen-in-mothers-pesticide-exposure-5594331.php>

The popular media often reports on the latest piece of the autism puzzle in keeping with the steady increase in the incidence of the disorder. This article focuses on links between exposure to pesticides and autism.

This article describes a study conducted at the UC Davis MIND Institute. Researchers examined pregnant women living in close proximity to agricultural land where pesticides (specifically organophosphates, pyrethroids and carbamates) were used. The case-control study found that these women were at significantly higher risk of delivering a child later identified with an Autism Spectrum Disorder or other developmental delay than were control women.

The article’s author points out that the study does not show cause and effect. This is an important distinction and useful, for example, to a parent attempting to assimilate this information into their reproductive planning. It’s relevant that the author’s title may be misunderstood to suggest “exposure” as consumption of foods sprayed with pesticides or other defined exposure. Rather, “exposure” appears not to be proven, but rather there was a “risk of exposure” based on proximity.

The same SF Gate news feed reports on a study conducted at UCSF looking at physician counseling regarding environmental hazards. The article cites a combination of lack of specific knowledge and evidence on chemical exposures with a hesitation to scare patients. This article touches on the challenge that providers face when discussing mainstream health news with their patients. In cases where there is not a consensus in the medical community what do we say? In an attempt to fill in a few of the knowledge gaps the following links are provided.

**RESOURCES AND INFORMATION REGARDING CHEMICAL EXPOSURE DURING PREGNANCY:**

General information from ACOG

<https://www.acog.org/About_ACOG/News_Room/News_Releases/2013/Environmental_Chemicals_Harm_Reproductive_Health>

Patient handout from ACOG

<https://www.acog.org/~/media/Departments/Health%20Care%20for%20Underserved%20Women/Images/EnvironmentalChemicalsInfographic.jpg>

Environmental Exposure Assessment from UCSF’s Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment

<http://prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/pdfs/Huffling%20prenatal-preconception%20assessment.pdf>

And that’s today’s Developmental & Behavioral Pediatrics: IN THE NEWS!