

# Scientists call for 'swifter and sounder' testing of chemicals

March 3 2011

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Scientific societies representing 40,000 researchers and clinicians are asking that federal regulators tap a broader range of expertise when evaluating the risks of chemicals to which Americans are being increasingly exposed.

Writing in a letter in the journal *Science*, eight societies from the fields of genetics, [reproductive medicine](#), endocrinology, developmental biology and others note that some 12,000 new substances are being registered with the American [Chemical Society](#) daily. Few make it into the environment, but the top federal regulators, the U.S. [Food and Drug Administration](#) and the [Environmental Protection Agency](#), often lack information about the hazards of chemicals produced in high volumes.

"The need for swifter and sounder testing and review procedures cannot be overstated," the letter states.

Patricia Hunt, a professor in the Washington State University School of Molecular Biosciences and corresponding author of the letter, said the FDA and EPA need to look beyond the toxicology of substances to the other ways chemicals can affect us.

"One of the problems they have is they look at some of the science and don't know how to interpret it because it's not done using the traditional toxicology testing paradigm," she said. "We need geneticists, we need developmental and reproductive biologists and we need the clinical people on board to actually help interpret and evaluate some of the

science."

"As things stand now," she added, "things get rapidly into the marketplace and the testing of them is tending to lag behind."

Hunt said the letter was driven in particular by growing concerns about chemicals like the plasticizer bisphenol A, or BPA, subject of more than 300 studies finding adverse health effects in animals. Because such chemicals look like hormones to our body, they're like strangers getting behind the wheels of our cars, Hunt said.

"Hormones control everything—our basic metabolism, our reproduction," she said. "We call them endocrine disruptors. They're like endocrine bombs to a certain extent because they can disrupt all these normal functions."

Hunt's testimony last year helped make Washington the fifth state to outlaw BPA in children's food containers and drinking cups.

Provided by Washington State University

Citation: Scientists call for 'swifter and sounder' testing of chemicals (2011, March 3) retrieved 29 April 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2011-03-scientists-swifter-sounder-chemicals.html>

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