

# AGROMEDICINE PROGRAM UPDATE

MUSC DEPARTMENT OF FAMILY MEDICINE – DIVISION OF PUBLIC HEALTH AND PUBLIC SERVICE  
19 HAGOOD AVENUE – SUITE 305 HOT, P.O. BOX 250805, CHARLESTON, SC 29425

Wm. M. Simpson, Jr., MD, Editor  
Simpsonwm@musc.edu  
843-792-2281 Fax 843-792-4702

Volume 16  
No. 12  
December 15, 2004

*Previous issues are available at [www.musc.edu/oem/apunews.html](http://www.musc.edu/oem/apunews.html)*

## PROGRAM NOTES

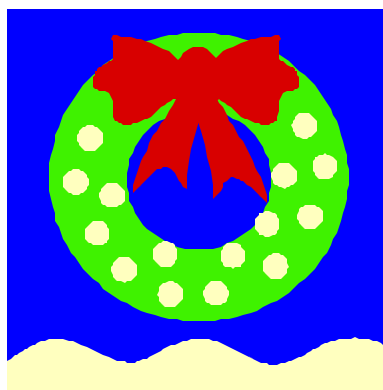
> While Christmas is still a couple of weeks away, I have already received two wonderful presents! Not wanting to “toot my own horn,” I hesitate to use this forum to mention them—Dr. Stan Schuman, Emeritus Professor and founding Medical Director of the Agromedicine Program said I should—so here goes.

In August of this year I received the Distinguished Faculty Service award from the Medical University of SC, one of three given this year.

In November I was named South Carolina Family Physician of the Year by the SC Academy of Family Physicians.

In my remarks at both award ceremonies, I emphasized the large contributions of my parents, spouse and children to all that I have done and the many mentors and colleagues I have learned from over the years—including the aforementioned Dr. Schuman!

Happy Holidays and Best Wishes for a bright and blessed 2005!



From the Agromedicine Program

## RECENT CONSULTS

### > "A Cloud of Dust"

A family physician in the Midlands called regarding a truck driver exposed to what he was told was a vapor cloud of "Perkadox 16" while waiting in his truck outside a chemical plant. His throat and eyes were irritated initially, and when symptoms persisted for a week, he consulted his physician. Physical findings were limited to minimally irritated mucous membranes. A call to the manufacturer was necessary to get a copy of the Material Safety

Data Sheet (MSDS). In it, Perkadox 16 is listed as a white powder of low toxicity, but which could produce mucous membrane irritation.

Our advice to the physician—since the cloud was not just Perkadox 16, get more information from the plant regarding other exposures in the cloud. Since the patient is gradually improving, no further intervention is necessary unless the irritation fails to completely subside or new exposure information indicates a need for specific therapy.

### > **Still More on Mold**

In the October issue of APU, I wrote "There is no reason for mold species identification, irritant and allergic symptoms respond regardless of the particular mold involved"

In an attempt to save space, I neglected to add that in some cases, when symptomatic therapy is inadequate, allergy testing using RAST or skin tests may be necessary to identify the offending mold species (but still not environmental mold species identification)

## >Leftover Chemicals

A caller from the PeeDee inquired about possible health effects of moving large quantities of soil that had been used as a golf course for the past 30 or so years to make way for another large development. Her main concern was for exposure to chemicals that had been used for weed and fungus control in the golf course turf.

Our response was that the chemicals used for weed and fungus control (herbicides and fungicides) in the last 30 years have little persistence in the environment. They were developed to avoid the problems of earlier chemicals that were persistent (DDT, etc.).

Other possible health effects of exposure to large quantities of dust are still areas of active investigation. It appears that the combination of cigarette smoking and long exposure to dusty environments increases risk of silicosis, much like exposure to cotton dust leads to byssinosis only in combination with cigarette smoking.

Other issues are probably more important for public concern: land use, habitat loss, storm water runoff, strain on infrastructure, etc.

**\*\*PLEASE KEEP THOSE CONSULTS COMING!\*\***

## FROM THE LITERATURE

>The November issue of the Progressive Farmer (PF) magazine has a one page summary of the results of a health survey sent to readers of the magazine.

The Editor-in-Chief of the publication, Jack Odle, is the author of the summary. He compares the results of the survey with data on the U.S. as a whole and finds:

--PF readers 8 times more likely to be taking prescriptions for prostate cancer  
--3 times more likely to take cholesterol and blood pressure medicines  
--3 times more likely to have arthritis and twice as likely to have diabetes

These results don't fit with previously reported measures of farm health, so this sounds like there may be a problem with the survey or perhaps those surveyed. So some questions for the author—how was the sample selected?, what was the response rate?, how were the comparison statistics obtained?

I will contact Mr. Odle and let you know the rest of the story next month.

--Odle J. Taking a look at your health. *Progressive Farmer* 2004;119(9): 22

## OPINION

At this time of feasting and daily information in the newspaper about obesity in the U. S., I've begun to think again about all the talk about a "Twinkie tax."(TT)

The idea is that we (the government) will tax foods which are bad for us, making them more expensive. The tax proceeds will be used for several purposes including subsidizing the cost of "good foods" making them relatively cheaper, producing more advertising for the things which we should eat and supporting more research into methods of preventing and treating obesity.

A "Twinkie-like" tax has been used in many states before to decrease cigarette consumption and research does support the fact that higher prices on cigarettes decrease smoking rates in children. Unfortunately much of the money derived from these taxes has not ended up in the hands of health educators or the health care system in general, but overall the tax does have the desired effect.

There are plenty of problems with the TT, but there are huge problems with obesity, hypertension, hypercholesterolemia, MI's, etc. and most of what we are doing right now involves medications at very high cost.

Maybe it is time to take the TT seriously. It most certainly is not the whole answer, but it may be a start!

--(for more discussion on the "Twinkie Tax," visit [www.google.com](http://www.google.com) and enter "Twinkie Tax" as your search term.