

The Derrh...!!! Principle

by Alf Orpen

As the broadcaster Edward Murrow once said:

"The obscure we always see sooner or later, the obvious always seems to take a little longer"

And so it is with so many people following good diets for health purposes whilst absorbing daily

toxic substances many times more toxic than those found in foods, through the application of personal 'care' products. According to governments worldwide cosmetics (creams, lotions, etc) 'improve appearance' and therefore do not fall under regulations that would otherwise subject them to an intensive review process. For this reason the cosmetic industry is pretty much self regulated.

Armed with this knowledge leaves room for us to ask such questions as: How is it that we can conduct LD50* tests, find that ingredients cause tumours and other serious abnormalities in animals, and then allow them to be used in cosmetics? We know for sure that all agents (bar one - trivalent arsenic) that cause cancer in humans also cause cancer in mice. Why is it then that there is debate whether the reverse is true? Some scientists claim, "it may not be the case". Yet other scientists through simple observation of the above fact argue, "it is highly likely that the reverse would be the case". The truth of the matter is that in many cases only after years of public use, do we conclude: "yes it certainly is the case" and then go about removing those substances from the market place.

Isn't it about time we took a serious look at what we are putting on our bodies everyday and not waiting for toxic substances to be banned before we stop using them? This is what would normally be termed as "the precautionary principle**."

Last October I attended the Bioneers conference in San Rafael, California and heard the brilliant young Native American activist Clayton Thomas-Muller speak. He caught my attention when he stated that, "you people go on about the precautionary principle, we have another term for it.....we call it the *derrh... principle*"

Not only did he make us all laugh, but convincingly articulated how what should be viewed as simply common-sense, can

sometimes be complicated by scientific terminology and processes.

Derrh...!!!

If a paraben is used in cosmetics and is found in 18 out of 20 breast cancers*** shouldn't we simply avoid it and not want to wait until the evidence is "conclusive"? Didn't the tobacco industry argue for three decades that the mutation of human cells developed by smoking cigarettes was "not conclusive" despite many university studies indicating smoking to be the cause?

Derrh...!!!

Lets be pro-active and use our not so common, common-sense.

*LD stands for "Lethal Dose". LD50 is the amount of a material, given all at once, which causes the death of 50% (one half) of a group of test animals. The LD50 is one way to measure the short-term poisoning potential (acute toxicity) of a material. Toxicologists can use many kinds of animals but most often testing is done with rats and mice. It is usually expressed as the amount of chemical administered (e.g., milligrams) per 100 grams (for smaller animals) or per kilogram (for bigger test subjects) of the body weight of the test animal. The LD50 can be found for any route of entry or administration but dermal (applied to the skin) and oral (given by mouth) administration methods are the most common.

**Where, following an assessment of available scientific information, there are reasonable grounds for concern for the possibility of adverse effects but scientific uncertainty persists, provisional risk management measures based on a broad cost/benefit analysis whereby priority will be given to human health and the environment, necessary to ensure the chosen high level of protection in the Community and proportionate to this level of protection, may be adopted, pending further scientific information for a more comprehensive risk assessment, without having to wait until the reality and seriousness of those adverse effects become fully apparent.

***Parabens (alkyl esters of p-hydroxybenzoic acid) are widely used as antimicrobial preservatives in thousands of cosmetics, personal care products, pharmaceutical products, and food. There are six commonly used forms (Methylparaben, Ethylparaben, p-Propylparaben, Isobutylparaben, n-Butylparaben and Benzylparaben) and it is estimated that they are used in at least 13,200 cosmetics products. According to the lead researcher of the recent study, Philippa Darbre, an oncology expert at the university of Reading, in Edinburgh, the chemical form of the parabens found in 18 of the 20 tumors tested indicated that they originated from something applied to the skin, the most likely candidates being deodorants, antiperspirants, creams, or body sprays. The research was published in the Journal of Applied Toxicology on 8 January 2004.

