

I am Deborah Altschuler, president and co-founder of the National Pediculosis Association (or the NPA), a nonprofit organization from the United States established in 1983. The NPA is comprised of volunteers on a mission to protect children and families from the unnecessary use and abuse of pesticides classified as drugs for lice. NPA's philosophy? We can't remove every potentially harmful chemical exposure from a child's life, making it imperative to remove those that we can.

It's an honor to be here and represent the NPA's LiceMeister® comb – one of the first two products tested and accepted into the Secretariat's Pilot Project to identify POPs-free products as alternatives to listed substances. The most gratifying part of participating in the POPs-free initiative is the way it brings children's health to the forefront. The LiceMeister comb provides a rational, cost effective, practical, safe and proven alternative to lindane.

It is with our programs of education and the LiceMeister® comb that the NPA and the Los Angeles Bureau of Sanitation received the First Place Most Valuable Pollution Prevention Award in 2001. "In 2002, California banned pharmaceutical use of lindane because of concerns about water quality, as lindane treatment for head lice and scabies was found to be a significant factor adversely affecting wastewater quality." (Ref)

The project was described as the first major program to convince physicians to change the medications they prescribe based on environmental concerns. It provided evidence that protecting the public health and the environment from pharmaceutical lindane was an attainable goal.

The LiceMeister comb is an FDA cleared medical device since 1998. It is accepted as a non-chemical treatment for lice which means it is also a non-chemical treatment alternative to malathion, permethrin, and antibiotics.

Combing is not sophisticated science. Yet the science of pesticides is complex. Based on the precautionary principle, use of lindane as a second line treatment is illogical and dangerous with or without the adverse event data we have in hand to support it.

Treatment failure is predictable without thorough nit removal. Treatment failure -- no matter what the cause -- encourages the use of more pesticides. If you don't get them out you've still got them! Currently, a two ounce prescription of lindane for a person with lice is a minimum of \$125.00. This is before one factors the cost of its pollution.

The \$9.95 LiceMeister comb accomplishes what lindane and other chemicals cannot.

The comb is safe and cost effective. It can be cleaned or sterilized and can be used repeatedly for years. It enables families to be self-reliant -- to accomplish routine screening, early detection and removal of ALL lice and nits. It is a proactive approach rather than a reactive one. It is an objective diagnostic tool that prevents use of pesticides out of fear. Combing is the standard procedure scientists employ to collect data in medical research and chemical product development. With gratitude to the Convention - - we can now bring the same benefits of knowledge and combing to the the world -- but without the chemicals!

At its inception in 1946, the World Health Organization proclaimed that the “enjoyment of the highest attainable standard of health is one of the fundamental rights of every human being.” There are endless lists of challenges to accomplish such a standard. But when it comes to people with head lice, the millions of dollars spent on pediculicides and the environmental risks of manufacturing, waste, disposal and pharmaceutical pollution – we have the answer in hand – literally.

“The future depends on our wisdom not to replace one poison with another.” AND “Nothing compares to the kindness of a comb!”

Would like to introduce Dee Wright who is here for the discussion part of the program as she has great experience in putting the LiceMeister comb to work.

Humphreys, EH, et al Environ Health Perspect, 2008 Mar; 116(3):297-302, Outcomes of the California ban on pharmaceutical lindane: clinical and ecologic impacts.

More about NPA and the Stockholm Convention:

http://web.archive.org/web/20131403292900/http://www.headlice.org/news/2011/stockholm_convention_news.htm