Panel Discussion: What does a Successful Risk Communication Strategy for PFAS Sites Look Like?.

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Incorporating The Community into Risk Communication

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PFOA Contamination: Little Hocking Water Association, Ohio.

- Water Intake across Ohio River from DuPont Teflon Production Facility
- PFOA detected in water
- Community-Based NIH funded study of stratified sample of residents found:
  - High serum PFOA in residents (~80x US medians)
  - Source of PFOA is drinking water
  - No detectable short-term health effects
Community-Based Study

- Studied by Research Partnership
  - Environmental Health Researcher
  - Local Physician
  - Community association

- Communication throughout Study Period

- “Community-First” Communication of Results and Risks
  - Process developed with community in advance of results being available by Community Advisory Committee
Little Hocking Community: General Principles for Communication of Results

- Study participants should receive results first; avoid first learning results from press, neighbors or friends.
- Inform press in timely way, investigators control the message as possible.
- Results released promptly, once investigators comfortable.
- Study must remain a credible given various stakeholders.
- Communications should maximize constructive responses to findings.
- Communications should minimize pointless concern.
- Questions from individuals answered promptly.
Communities’ Priority for Communication of Results

1. Study Participants
2. The community i.e. residents of the water district
3. Community Advisory Committee
4. Relevant authorities and representatives
5. Local medical providers
6. Local media
7. National media
8. Scientific community
Success of Little Hocking Communications

- **Recommendations Included:**
  - Use bottled water
  - Institute treatment of water, reduce PFOA emission, consult personal physicians re individual medical issues (we could advise physicians).

- **Adoption of Recommendations (from follow-up study):**
  - 95% changed Water Source
  - Most but not all adopted bottled water recommendations
  - Blood PFOA levels reduced substantially
  - All parties took prudent actions as a result of information
  - Pleasure that communication preferences respected
Lessons From Other Studies

- **GM/UAW Risk Communication of Research**
  - Responsible parties all endorse communications
  - What is the employee/manager to do?
  - What is the company going to do?
  - Present results and recommendations/responses simultaneously!
  - Make information available to the individual’s doctor

- **Asbestos Exposure in Ambler PA**
  - Great range of risk perception even in the same family
  - Risks vary among individuals
  - Expect different responses to risk, try to inform them all.
Risk Communication

Inform those who need to know, to help their decision-making?

OR

Cover your ass?