

A Health Surveillance of Pesticide Sprayers in Talwandi Sabo Area of Punjab, North-West India

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ABSTRACT Human pesticide poisoning has become major public health issue these days. Throughout the world highest levels of pesticide exposure are found in the farm workers, applicators and people living adjacent to heavily treated agricultural land. Pesticides are linked to various chronic diseases like cancers, infertility, kidney failure, reproductive problems and nervous disorders. The present study had been carried out to examine the acute symptoms of pesticide spraying in the farm workers of three villages in Talwandi Sabo block of Bathinda district of Punjab, a cotton growing area with high usage of pesticides. This is an exploratory health study recorded face-to-face on pre-tested questionnaire. A total of 108 male sprayers from villages Bangi Nihal Singh (34), Jajjal (39) and Mahi Nangal (35) were field interviewed about the immediate impact of pesticides during spraying season from September-October 2003. Majority of the sprayers complained of having nausea, itchiness of the eyes, pain while urinating, discolored nails, nails dropping off, swollen fingers, sleeplessness, headache, excessive sweating and skin rashes. Immediate attention should be given to the implementation of proper awareness programs to pesticide workers. Also, practices like Integrated Pest Management, Organic Farming, Biopesticides, and Crop Diversification should be promoted.