

International Society of Doctors for the Environment

Linking Human Health and the Environment



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Recent articles in the peer-reviewed literature have reported the safe, efficacious use of alternatives to lindane for treatment of head lice, including wet combing¹, Cetaphil cleanser, dimethicone lotion², and hot air treatments³. The efficacy of these alternatives matched or exceeded that of lindane without the development of resistance or toxic effects for the patient. The Cochrane review found permethrin to be the preferred pediculicidal treatment for both lice and scabies treatment.⁴ A 2006 article in the *Lancet* reported a variety of safe, effective alternatives to the use of lindane for treatment of scabies, including sulphur in petrolatum, permethrin, oral ivermectin in combination with topical permethrin and kerolytic therapy, as well as certain medicinal oils.⁵ In the journal, *American Academy of Family Physicians*, researchers cited data from several clinical trials and concluded that oral ivermectin is as effective as topical lindane for the treatment of human scabies.⁶

Continued use of lindane is also problematic from a broader public health perspective. Lindane-containing products contaminate drinking water sources and directly expose young children and other vulnerable populations to this pesticide that can harm their nervous system and brain function. Moreover, because lindane is highly persistent and travels globally via air and water, existing stockpiles and its continued use pose an exposure risk to people far from the source. Lindane is now one of the most abundant pesticides in Arctic air and water, and northern Indigenous Peoples are exposed through their traditional diets. Lindane residues have also been reported in a variety of common foods.

Given the widespread exposure and potential public health risk posed by lindane, along with the availability of safer, affordable alternatives for the treatment of head lice and scabies, we do not believe that the scientific or clinical data justify an exemption for pharmaceutical uses of lindane. We call on you to work toward the rapid elimination of all uses of lindane.

Sincerely,

Lilian Corra
ISDE Past President and International Coordinator

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¹ Workshop on Alternatives to Lindane Use, sponsored by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation Lindane Task Force in Mexico City (October 4-6, 2005).

² Pearlman, D. 2005. Cetaphil cleanser cures head lice. *Pediatrics* 116(6):1612-1613.

³ Goates, B.M. 2006. An effective non-chemical treatment for head lice. *Pediatrics* 118(5):1962-70.

⁴ Workshop on Alternatives to Lindane Use, sponsored by the North American Commission for Environmental Cooperation Lindane Task Force in Mexico City (October 4-6, 2005).

⁵ Heukelbach, J. and Feldmeier. 2006. Scabies. *The Lancet* 367:1767-1774.

⁶ Apgar, B. 2000. *American Family Physician* 61(2): January 15, 2000.