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Fracking and women's health

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Posted: Monday, May 20, 2013 10:16 am

Miranda C. Spencer, Shalereporter.com | 2 comments



Posted on May 20, 2013
by Miranda Spencer

One of the most talked about headlines last week was [Angelina Jolie's decision to have a preventative double mastectomy](#). Although she is otherwise healthy, she carries a "faulty gene," called BRCA 1, that puts her at unusually high risk for breast

cancer.

Gorgeous movie star, globe-trotting humanitarian, mother of six -- Ms. Jolie is not your average woman. Her health dilemma is also atypical: [only 5 percent to 10 percent of breast cancer cases have a genetic link](#).

For the other 90 percent of us, prevention means avoiding the risks we can control through personal lifestyle choices. It also means [keeping toxic substances linked to breast cancer](#) out of the environment through public policy.

That's why fracking is the latest front in the war against breast cancer. Late last month, the New York State Breast Cancer Support and Education Network, a coalition of Empire State nonprofits, released a webinar, "Fracking and Its Connection to Breast Cancer." Created in collaboration with EarthWorks, a nonprofit focused on responsible energy development, and Breast Cancer Action, a grassroots education and advocacy organization, the webinar explores the process and elements of hydrofracking that are known to be linked to breast cancer incidence and risk.

If you've got an hour, [you can watch it here](#).

If you don't, here's the gist: Some of the chemicals linked to breast cancer are found in fracking fluids. These include carcinogens and "endocrine disruptors," a class of compounds that mess around with our hormones, compounding exposures we have every day through additives found in consumer products. Radioactive elements, [like those found in fracking wastewater](#), are also linked to elevated breast cancer risk.

Moreover, the latest research shows that the timing of exposure influences the effect on the human body – [meaning pregnant women, fetuses and pubescent girls may be at higher risk](#). In some cases, lower doses can be more dangerous than higher ones! Moreover, the harm may be even passed to future generations .

That's what we already know. What we don't know, the activists argue, is making us the shale boom's guinea pigs. Cancers develop slowly, over decades, so it is important to track toxic exposures from fracking against future breast and other cancer rates through long-term health-impact studies.

Until then, they recommend practicing "[the precautionary principle](#)" – holding off

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Miranda C. Spencer, a researcher with the online news sites Environmental Health News and The Daily Climate, is a freelance journalist and media critic based in the New York metro area. Her writing over the past 25 years, including eight magazine cover stories, has appeared in The Daily Climate, Extra! (the journal of FAIR), E magazine, American Forests, and many other publications. Miranda's investigative work has been honored by Project Censored. Her website is [Red Panda Communications](#).



Suzie Gilbert is a writer, a state and federally licensed wild bird rehabilitator, and the founder of Flyaway, Inc., a non-profit organization dedicated to the rescue, rehabilitation and release of injured and orphaned wild birds. She has written an award-winning environmental column for Taconic News Media, and has published the children's book "Hawk Hill" (Chronicle Books, 1996), and her memoir "Flyaway" (Harpercollins, 2009.) Her articles and opinion pieces have appeared in various newspapers, including the Washington Post. She blogs for "The Crooked Wing" and "10,000

on fracking until it is proven safe, rather than waiting to ban it until after it is proven harmful.

The precautionary approach jibes with [the official position of the federal government's Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee](#). Earlier this year, the panel released a report "Breast Cancer and the Environment: Prioritizing Prevention" [<http://1.usa.gov/YRLRVO>], which recommends "a national breast cancer prevention strategy to prioritize and increase federal government investments in breast cancer prevention." It also calls for interdisciplinary research on "the effects of chemical and physical factors that potentially influence the risk of developing, and likelihood of surviving, breast cancer."

The network wants to advance that goal by obtaining a ["thorough Health Impact Assessment" of fracking in New York State](#). Unlike the opaque "health review" now underway, the study it wants would be "designed in accord with national and international guidelines," open and transparent, and conducted by independent experts.

New Yorkers have high stakes in the game, with [one of the nation's higher breast-cancer incidence rates](#), according to the federal Centers for Disease Control. Fracking-friendly Pennsylvania and Ohio already have some of the highest breast-cancer death rates in the country.

Are we willing to compound these risks before we fully understand them? I bet Angelina would say no.

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Posted in Miranda spencer on Monday, May 20, 2013 10:16 am.

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Birds" and has been profiled in both the New York Times and on Andrew C. Revkin's New York Times blog, Dot Earth.



Tara's academic work and pursuits are focused on eco-feminism and ethics. Tara has been featured on AOL's Patch.com as a weekly columnist, Moxie Momma, exploring social concerns and parenting strategies. Writing articles on lifestyle, entertainment and local travel, Tara has been a regular contributor to the Bethlehem, Hellertown and Upper Saucon Patch. As a research and investigative journalist, Tara's work is regularly featured in the Elucidator Magazine. A specialist in the technical fields of psychology, philosophy and theology, Tara also teaches classes on Ethics and Moral Dilemmas, Death and Dying, World Religions, and Introduction to Philosophy.



Kimberley Sirk is in communications in the healthcare industry. She is also the features editor for Drug Discovery News, which reports on issues, trends and product development in the pharmaceutical industry. She has more than 15 years of experience in a broad range of professional positions, including newspaper journalism, university public relations and county government management.



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2 comments:

karldure12 posted at 5:59 am on Thu, Jun 27, 2013.

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Nice and piece full work by the Miranda. Through her article she acknowledge us how the women must take care up of themselves by neglecting the recent trend fashion threats.aje clothing

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Suzie Gilbert posted at 10:57 am on Mon, May 20, 2013.

Posts: 10

Great piece, Miranda, packed with information. Everyone is writing about the movie star with the double mastectomy, but not many go past the "faulty gene" and into the facts about the industrial/environmental threats all women face when it comes to their health. Nice job!

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