

SUPPORT GROWING FOR PESTICIDE EXPOSURE STUDY

By Monroe S. Miller

The decision last year by the GCSAA to initiate a study on the effects of pesticide exposure is gaining wide support as more and more people learn about it and the details of how it will be conducted.

Given the suspicion a lot of citizens have concerning pesticide issues, the tact is to address those suspicions head on and learn, to use plain language, what causes death among golf course superintendents.

As Bill Roberts pointed out last year while he was GCSAA president, nothing could hurt the game of golf more than if players believed the game might be dangerous to their health. Science can demonstrate to them and to the public that golf courses are safe and healthy places. But somebody has to pay for the science. Therefore, fund raising for the pesticide exposure study takes on major significance.

This study will examine causes of death among GCSAA members over the past several years. Records will be studied and compare illnesses among golf course superintendents with the national average and possibly with "control groups" of people who have never been exposed to turf pesticides.

The University of Iowa's College of Medicine was selected to conduct this important new study of occupational exposure among our members. The initial phase will focus on superintendents because we are typically exposed to both concentrated and diluted pesticides throughout our careers.

Depending on the results of this phase, later studies may examine health trends among living superintendents, their employees and even golf players.

Dr. Burton Kross of the University of Iowa Medical School's Institute of Occupational Health will head up the

study. Dr. Kross and his team are widely considered to be the foremost epidemiological researchers in the country when it comes to pesticide exposure. He is also leading a 10-year EPA/NIH study of urban pesticide exposure, indicating that we probably couldn't have a better group working on our behalf.

The work is already underway. The Iowa group has received GCSAA's extensive records of members from the past 25 years, and expect to have the work done next January. Results may be reported at conference in Dallas in February.

The funding is being handled by the GCSAA Scholarship and Research Fund, and they are looking to golf course superintendents from all across the country for financial support.

Rod Johnson has taken the lead in our state. As you know, the signs now required by the State of Wisconsin Department of Agriculture, Trade and Consumer Protection were made available through Rod and the WGCSA. Any profits from that effort will go toward the funding of the study.

Rod has also gotten the support of the Greater Milwaukee Area Country Club Association. Members clubs are showing their concern by contributing to the GCSAA S&R Fund in the sum of \$250. Full support will add significantly to the Wisconsin effort.

Everyone in the golf community, but especially golf course superintendents, should get behind this research. It's a project that will benefit everyone. So if you did not purchase signs from the WGCSA or if your employer is not a member of the GMACCA, consider independent support.

If you have any questions, contact Rod. His leadership on this issue should be appreciated by all. ♣

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