

Introduction to Topic:

During my time as a fellow for the McCune Wright Law Firm, one of the major projects I had the privilege of working on consisted of a medical devices case involving the common household use weedkiller called RoundUp. RoundUp is a very popular spray herbicide that many people in the US use at home in their personal gardens or on their driveways to kill weeds. What these users do not know is that the key active ingredient in RoundUp, glyphosate the non-selective herbicide has been linked in several studies to many incidences of Non-Hodgkins Lymphoma Cancer. Thus, the McCune Wright Law Firm and other law firms have taken up the task to file a “multi district litigation” or large class action case comprised of many smaller court cases in different regions against the manufacturers of RoundUp, Bayer.

The Issue:

Unfortunately, although many published and peer reviewed studies have concluded that the substance glyphosate ought to be treated as a chemical that is “possibly or highly carcinogenic” to humans, the company manufacturing RoundUp, Bayer (previously known as Monsanto) continues to sell units of their product as usual. What is worse is that there has been leaked emails and other forms of internal communication between board members and other officials within Bayer/Monsanto that has confirmed their knowledge of the potential harm of glyphosate via conversations with Ph.D. specialists.

Despite the many scientific studies that point towards glyphosate’s danger on human cells, big name organizations such as the EPA, or Environmental Protection Agency has failed to label glyphosate as a human carcinogen. Even though other global scale health organizations such as the World Health Organization and publishers have announced that glyphosate is indeed carcinogenic, the EPA and Bayer/Monsanto still stand firm on their claims regarding glyphosate. The importance of winning these cases against Bayer/Monsanto is not only to bring justice to the victims of RoundUp and provide due compensation for their cancer diagnosis, but to also create grounds for change in the EPA and environmental policies surrounding herbicide usage.

Recommendations for Policy:

One of the main recommendations for policy is to ban personal usage of glyphosate and to ban companies who create weed killers/pesticides such as Monsanto (also known as Bayer). Since the clients that McCune Wright Law Firm represent are all recreational gardeners, the banning of glyphosate entirely or capping the dosage is appropriate as recreational gardeners do not typically think to calculate the dosage appropriate per square footage of garden they have or fraction of an acre.

Additionally, petitioning to the EPA (Environmental Protection Agency) to change their current statement of glyphosate as a non-probable carcinogen to high likelihood of carcinogenic effects would be important. Following this should be stricter protocols in the dosages/concentrations of glyphosate in herbicides in both personal and commercial usage. Potential substitutions for herbicides such as safer alternatives ought to be encouraged via policy. Perhaps an initial monetary incentive from the government for large corporations to switch from glyphosate to a safer alternative or lessen the dosage of herbicide could help stimulate the change.

Environmental Prevention/Behavior Change Interventions

Some environmental prevention interventions include:

- Funding to clubs or organizations to form unions against heavy pesticides/herbicide usage
- Funding research for long term effects/cohort studies regarding herbicide usage
- Creating a government fund to incentivize households and farmers to avoid using RoundUp or other harsh pesticides and herbicides
- Collaborate with local farmers who tend to not use such harsh pesticides to indirectly incentivize stakeholders

Some behavior change interventions could include:

- A switch to healthier eating by eating organic instead of regular produce to avoid consuming glyphosate
- Switching to soils that naturally are less prone to weeds such as gravel/mulch/desert gardening to avoid needing weed killer in the first place

Adverse Effects of Glyphosate:



NEWS

Monsanto Asks Judge to Vacate \$289M Roundup Verdict, Citing Lack of Evidence

Monsanto cited a 2017 ruling in a case involving Johnson & Johnson's powder, in which the judge vacated a \$417 million verdict due to lack of evidence.

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My Goals and Tasks:

At the McCune Wright Law Firm, I was tasked with not only educating the legal team about the science behind cancer (how cancer works, what is a carcinogen, why Non-Hodgkin's Lymphoma is highly linked to glyphosate, how Non-Hodgkin's cancer works, etc) but also

various aspects of dealing with the case such as finding expert witnesses to testify in court. I've also aided in filling out patient file excel sheets by researching information on past court cases/victims as this law firm did not have access to the medical charts of previously tried victims.

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