

US EPA ARCHIVE DOCUMENT

## California-Baja California Integrated Pesticide Illness Surveillance and Prevention Project

### Project Purpose

Pesticide illness surveillance provides essential information for appropriate public health, investigative and regulatory actions following pesticide exposures, to promote protective measures for the community, and to help identify problem pesticides, among other uses.

In both California and Baja California, pesticide illnesses among farmworkers are poorly diagnosed and severely underreported. Pesticide illness surveillance depends greatly on farmworkers recognizing pesticide exposures and illness, accessing care, and reporting the exposure to their employer and health care provider. Limited access to care and fear of retribution by employers often hinder reporting by farmworkers. In addition, physicians must recognize potential pesticide illness and must report suspected cases to authorities in a timely manner, as required by law. Physician recognition of pesticide illness, knowledge of reporting requirements, and actual reporting of cases remain poor.

Pesticide illness surveillance and follow-up is even more challenging in the California-Mexico border region, where a farmworkers may be exposed on one side of the border, they seek care across the border, and the cases are often not reported on either side. Without operational changes, these problems are unlikely to be resolved since currently no agreements or protocols exist for communication, coordination or data sharing between California and Baja California agencies responsible for pesticide surveillance. Without this system in place, characterization, prevention, and control of pesticide illnesses of common binational concerns will continue unabated.

### Project Description

To address the above-described pesticide surveillance deficiencies, a pilot project is underway to develop an integrated California-Baja California pesticide surveillance information exchange and training system that advances collaboration in pesticide illness recognition, management, investigation and reporting by responsible agencies, health-care providers and farmworkers in the California-Baja California border region. Specifically, this project will 1) develop agreements, protocol and a system for cross-border collaboration in pesticide illness surveillance; 2) train staff from participating agencies in that system; 3) train health care providers in the border region on pesticide illness diagnosis and reporting; and 4) conduct outreach to the farmworker community on pesticide-related issues, including prevention, recognition, access to care and reporting of pesticide illness. The California Office of Binational Border Health and the Instituto de Salud Pública del Estado de Baja California will serve as primary co-investigators on this project. Additional cooperation, expertise, and support will be provided by the Office of Environmental Health Hazard Assessment, the Department of Pesticide Regulation, Imperial County, and the Department of Health Services' Occupational Health Branch. Outreach will be conducted by certified community health workers (promotoras) and other methods, such as mass media.

## Expected Outcomes

1) Generate California-Baja California agreements and protocols for pesticide-related information and illness surveillance collaboration, including standardization of illness reporting format; 2) Pilot test the binational surveillance system; 3) Develop a summary report and evaluation of the surveillance system, including areas for improvement; 4) Six training sessions provided to health care providers and allied health professionals; 5) Generate or adapt outreach materials, including media messages, for the farmworker community to increase awareness of pesticide illness and access to medical care. 6) Five promotoras will provide outreach to at least 1,500 farmworkers and their families, either at their household or other sites (e.g., health fairs). 7) Conduct a media campaign targeted at farmworkers and their families.

## Project Contact

Alfonso Rodriguez-Lainz, Ph.D  
Chief Scientist  
Office of Binational Border Health  
California Department of Public Health  
5353 Mission Center Road, Suite #215  
San Diego, CA 92108  
(619) 688-0178  
[alfonso.rodriguez@cdph.ca.gov](mailto:alfonso.rodriguez@cdph.ca.gov)

## Key Collaborators

California Department of Health Services (Office of Environmental Health Hazard, Occupational Health Branch, and Environmental Health Investigations Branch), Imperial County Public Health Department, California Department of Pesticides Regulation, Instituto de Salud Pública del Estado de Baja California and Comisión Federal Para la Protección Contra Riesgos Sanitarios.