

Display

## Emory study discussed at community meeting

By Pamela Permar-Shierling

During what was billed as a community dialog, Emory University researchers returned to Brunswick last week (Wednesday, Jan. 16) to answer residents' questions about the chemicals in their blood.

The meeting was facilitated by an Investments of Healing Community Panel consisting of Dr. Kavanaugh Chandler, CEO Coastal Community Health; Allen Booker, Glynn County Commissioner District 5; Anita Collins, Urbana Perry Park NPA; Alice Keyes, One Hundred Miles; Rachael Thompson, Glynn Environmental Coalition.

Josiah 'Jazz' Watts, Justice Strategist for One Hundred Miles, introduced panel members and commented that the next steps are health, funding, and environmental justice.

In September 2023 scientists from Emory University's Rollins School of Public Health reported the results of their study on 100 Brunswick residents for four types of chemicals: metals (lead, cadmium and mercury); pesticides (DDE and toxaphene); polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs); and Per- and polyfluoroalkyl (PFAS).

Dr. Noah Scovronick, Assistant Professor Department of Environmental Health, presented the study results in September and again last week.

The study compared the levels of these chemicals in the participants' blood to the levels of the same chemicals in the average American.

Emory scientists continue to analyze the results. Dr. Scovronick cautioned that the study has not been peer reviewed nor has the data analysis been finished.

The overall results have not changed since they were presented in September.

- Metals - Levels were similar or a little higher than the average American

- General PCBs (PCB 118, 138, 152, and 180) - Levels were lower than the average American

- PCBs associated with Aroclor 1268 - Levels were higher than the average American. These are PCB 199 and PCB 206.

- DDE (a natural degradation of the pesticide DDT) - Levels were lower than the average American

- Toxaphene - Levels were a little higher to higher than the average American

- PFAS - Levels were similar to the average American

- PCBs are usually higher in older people. The general PCBs are found in white people; the AroclorPCB is higher in black people.

Toxaphene 26 is higher in black people; toxaphene 50 is higher in white people.

PFAS, AroclorPCB and mercury levels tend to be higher in people who fish.

Booker spoke early in the meeting saying he wanted Emory to create testing procedures to test people for these chemicals.

"It's bad," Booker said. "We need

to find resources to treat those with health effects."

Booker continued, "We need to make sure everyone has healthcare access. I'm not sure if health care professionals know what to do unless they have had training."

"We need to figure out how to find funding, build partnerships and move forward," he said.

Dr. Scovronick said general training has been provided for healthcare professionals regarding PCBs, pesticides and toxaphene and that more training is planned.

"As your healthcare provider to attend," he said. "Tonight we are here to think about actions and next steps."

Scovronick did provide new information.

For those tested, persons 60 and older the exposure was higher than in younger persons. The information provided:

PCB 196/203 - higher

PCB 199 - higher

PCB 206 - higher

Toxaphene - higher

Toxaphene 50 - higher

In black versus white the PCBs were higher in black persons and higher in Toxaphene 26 and lower in Toxaphene 50.

All of the above here higher in fishers vs non-fishers.

If you worked or lived with someone who worked at LCP compared to someone who did not, all PCBs were higher in those persons. Toxaphene 26 was higher while Toxaphene 50 was lower.

Scovronick said males tended to be more exposed but that the statistical evidence was low. The study did not determine the source of exposure: example, water or soil or if the exposure came from where a person might live.

One person asked how many more participants are needed for testing to provide higher confidence in the results.

Scovronick said it totally depended on who enrolls. "It will take two years or so to do a study on more people."

He said a residential study would look at where people live and link that information to exposure, but that many times people don't remember all the places they have lived.

"We could look at those who live within two miles or nearer to the site. There are all sorts of analyses we can do," he said.

He continued, "The study is not about the source. That will take multiple types of studies. This study is to understand current exposure levels."

Next steps from the panel members:

- Ms. Collins wants to see jobs provided and the community repaired for the damages to the soil, air and water.

- Ms. Keyes said the community should push for a natural resource damage assessment. This study will assess how much has been lost and the cost to restore the damage to the area's recreational and fishing.

She also said communities could pass ordinances to prohibit contamination.

- Ms. Thompson wants to facilitate community involvement in Glynn County's four superfund sites.

- Booker wants to expand the study, help increase healthcare access, and figure out how to stop the contamination.

- Dr. Chandler said a person's health issues may be connected to the toxicity. "Talk to your healthcare provider about it." He also said, "Our goal is access. Anyone should be able to be tested (for these chemicals)."

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