



## SUSTAINED OUTRAGE

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### C8 update: About that new WVU study ...

March 30, 2011 by Ken Ward Jr.



The Parkersburg-area media had an interesting take on last week's new WVU study about the potential impacts of the toxic chemical C8 on the early onset of menopause among women.

The first paragraph of [the story](#) summarized the WVU study, but the article didn't get to any further details about what the scientists studied or reported until much later in the piece. Instead, the next few paragraphs were simply quotes from a prepared statement issued by DuPont:

*"This paper does not actually report an association between early menopause and exposure to PFOA. The authors do not present any data in this study that would suggest any associations at all between PFOA and endocrine disrupting effects. The study does not demonstrate a statistical correlation between PFOA exposure and the onset of menopause in women between 18 and 42 years of age. If early onset of menopause were to occur, it would be observed in this age group. The authors neither present data nor make such a claim in the paper," said Robin Ollis Stemple, external affairs, Washington Works spokesperson for DuPont.*

*"The authors state that additional caveats include the fact that information about menopause comes from survey data and was not independently confirmed, nor was it possible to establish the exact age of menopause. Further, the authors reported no association between PFOA exposure and levels of estradiol in any age group," said Janet E. Smith, Global public affairs leader, DuPont Chemicals and Fluoroproducts, DuPont spokesperson.*

Huh?

The Gazette was the first media outlet to report the findings of [this study](#), published in the *Journal of Clinical Endocrinology & Metabolism*. In our [story](#), we explained the findings this way:

*Women exposed to higher levels of the toxic chemical C8 were more*

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*likely to have experienced menopause, according to a new West Virginia University study that offers some of the strongest evidence to date that such chemicals disrupt the human body's natural hormone system.*

*The study found an association between chemicals called perfluorocarbons, or PFCs, in women's blood and the onset of menopause. It also found that higher levels of the chemicals appeared related to lower levels of estrogen.*

A story by ABC News [explained it in a similar way](#):

*Chemicals found in everyday products such as non-stick pans, clothing, furniture, carpets and paints have been associated with the early onset of menopause, according to a new study from the West Virginia University School of Medicine.*

But that Parkersburg paper's report got me wondering if maybe I misunderstood something here, especially the part where a DuPont publicist said:

*This paper does not actually report an association between early menopause and exposure to PFOA.*

So I circled back to Sarah Knox, the WVU researcher who was the study's lead author, and asked about the DuPont comments ... Dr. Knox told me:

*The study found that women with higher levels of two PFCs, perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA) and perfluorooctane sulfonate (PFOS) were more likely to have experienced an early menopause.*

*The conclusion was that **the two PFC are associated with this outcome**. In addition, one of the PFCs (PFOS) was also associated with lower estradiol (an estrogen level).*

Of course, no one study proves something this complicated, and as Dr. Knox pointed out:

*These results add to and are consistent with other animal and human studies suggesting endocrine disruption. However we were clear in the published paper and in interviews that this single study was short of proof that PFOA and PFOS are the cause of the earlier menopause.*



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