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May 22, 2019

Sana Shireen Ahmed, MD  
Medical Epidemiologist  
Lake County Health Department and Community Health Center  
3010 Grand Ave.  
Waukegan, Illinois 60085

Dear Dr. Ahmed:

I write to share with members of your community and you our thoughts about continuing cancer assessments relative to ethylene oxide (EtO) exposure. The Illinois Department of Public Health (IDPH) has received multiple inquiries and petition letters expressing a desire for a cancer incidence assessment in the area surrounding the Medline and Vantage Specialty Chemicals facilities in Lake County.

At IDPH, our mission is to protect the health and safety of all Illinoisans, which is why we moved swiftly to launch the Willowbrook cancer study as soon as we obtained the information about air sampling/dispersion data and estimated cancer risks. The Willowbrook study uncovered some important cancer elevations. As a general scientific principle, the study needs to be replicated in a different setting so its findings, most of which were reported for the first time, can be verified. Also, we observed that some numbers in the Willowbrook study were small and therefore unstable in sub-group analyses. It is clear that future studies should use larger sample sizes, potentially involving multiple sites, to achieve more robust estimates.

Our team of epidemiologists at IDPH are beginning to gather background information for a new and expanded study. In this new study, the two facilities in Lake County and the surrounding populations will be included, along with other documented sources of ethylene oxide and impacted populations. A significant element necessary for IDPH to conduct a new study is USEPA data for air sampling and dispersion of EtO in the affected communities.

Please be assured that IDPH will continue to conduct cancer studies following the highest scientific standards to make sure residents and policy-makers have accurate information in a timely manner moving forward.

Sincerely Yours,

Ngozi O Ezike, MD  
Director  
Illinois Department of Public Health