



Association pour la santé environnementale du Québec
Environmental Health Association of Québec

PRESS RELEASE FOR IMMEDIATE PUBLICATION

Conference and March on environmental sensitivities in Montreal, Saturday, May 28, 2011

Montreal, May 20, 2011 – Canadian pioneer in environmental medicine Dr John Molot will give a talk entitled ‘Toxic Trespass: Effects on Human Health’ at noon on May 28th at Concordia University. This conference is presented by The Environmental Health Association of Québec (EHAQ) because May is internationally regarded as Environmental Sensitivities Month. It will be followed by a march asking the Quebec government recognize the urgency of this medical condition (or major public health issue) requiring public education, appropriate medical care and social services.

Environmental Sensitivities is a chronic condition with multi-organ symptoms that recur reproducibly in response to low levels of exposure to multiple unrelated chemicals and improve or resolve when incitants are removed. This painful condition affects people of all ages. For years, those affected have suffered in silence because of the lack of recognition (only Germany, Austria and Japan have recognized this medical condition officially). According to Statistics Canada (2007), 3% of Canadians report receiving a diagnosis of environmental/multiple chemical sensitivities (MCS) from a medical doctor.

Dr. Molot is a staff physician at the Environmental Health Clinic at Women’s College Hospital in Toronto and Lecturer in Family Medicine at the University of Ottawa. He has also lectured at Lakehead and Toronto Universities. He has developed and provided workshops for both the Canadian and Ontario Colleges of Family Physicians on how to take an environmental exposure history and how to perform functional assessments in patients with Multiple Chemical / Environmental Sensitivities. His two-hour conference will touch on all aspects of how human health is impacted by everyday exposures to chemicals contained in commonly used products, the effects of these exposures and what we need to do to turn the tide.

The march will conclude with Dr Amir Khadir addressing the gathering at 2001 McGill College Avenue. Amir Khadir is medical doctor specializing in infectious microbiology and practices at the Pierre-Le-Gardeur Hospital at Lachenaie. A founding member of the Coalition of doctors for Social Justice, he has been active locally and abroad in this area for many years.

We ask that people who are healthy walk with us on May 28, especially for those who cannot be present because of this disability. Please help us give a voice to the silence.

Environmental Sensitivities are triggered following either a single massive exposure or repeated low level exposures to chemicals commonly released into the environment. The Canadian Human Rights Commission recognizes this medical condition as a disability and has a Policy (http://www.chrc-ccdp.ca/legislation_policies/policy_environ_politique-en.asp) which entitles protection under the Canadian Human Rights Act which also prohibits discrimination on the basis of disability.

The Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS) 2005, by Statistics Canada, found that just over 170,000 Quebecers reported MCS when asked about 'long term health conditions that have lasted or are expected to last six months or more and that have been diagnosed by a health professional.' Yet for most, their illnesses go without proper medical treatments due to the lack of government and public awareness, limited doctor training, and the need for a Designated Treatment Centre. There is no comprehensive treatment center in Quebec for people with sensitivities. Many conventional medical doctors have not been trained to recognize or treat environmental sensitivities. Generally, hospitals are not equipped to accommodate persons with sensitivities, although health care is considered a universal right.

On the other hand, thousands of MCS patients are treated in Halifax, at the Environmental Health Clinic funded by the government of Nova Scotia. The Canadian Medical Association has indicated that "there are many physicians who are acutely aware of the problems of environmental sensitivities ... have expertise in this area and are addressing the needs of patients with ... sensitivities". The Ontario College of Family Physicians trains doctors to recognize and treat environmental sensitivities. In Ottawa, several doctors treat patients with sensitivities and report that they have several thousand patients. Many Quebecers travel there at their own expense for consultation and treatment.

EHAQ is a non-profit, charitable organization founded in 2004. Present membership in the group is over 1200. The mission of EHAQ encompasses not only support (education, resources, telephone line (provides comfort and information), support meetings, healthy housing, resource guide, newsletter, etc) for people suffering from environmental sensitivities but also prevention through education on the use of ecological strategies in order to maintain a healthy environment. EHAQ will strive to raise awareness within communities, corporations, governments, educational institutions, the medical community and the general public to prevent further cases of environmental sensitivity. To help us in this venture we will work with doctors, scientists, interested groups and individuals across Canada and create ties with similar organizations throughout North America and overseas.

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