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Current Activity on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity

The Office of Chemical Safety and the National Industrial Chemicals Notification and Assessment Scheme (NICNAS) are currently preparing a report on Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS).

What is MCS?

MCS describes a complex array of symptoms where the underlying etiology remains ill defined. There are reports linking MCS to a wide range of environmental agents (including chemicals) and/or psychogenic factors. The symptoms experienced by individuals are diverse and reported symptoms can in some cases be quite debilitating. Further, diagnostic methods and treatments have yet to be agreed by the medical profession.

Background to the report

Given the uncertainty in relation to the cause(s), diagnosis and range of effective treatment(s) of MCS, a number of studies and enquiries on MCS have occurred, including in Australia. One consistent finding of such investigations has been the identification of the need for further research on MCS so as to enhance the understanding, prevention and management of MCS. However, these calls for further research have not specified priority areas for the research community. It is in this context that the Office of Chemical Safety and NICNAS are compiling a scientific report on MCS.

Scope of the report

The aim of the Review is to identify priority areas for further study to inform and engage the clinical and scientific research community. The review also incorporates a report into current diagnosis and clinical management strategies for MCS prepared by specialist medical practitioners, and considers practical measures to improve the management of MCS patients.

The report is therefore examining evidence about:

- the mode of action for chemical interactions within MCS
- approaches to clinical diagnosis of MCS, and
- clinical management strategies.

Engagement with MCS interest groups and organisations is planned for the early part of 2008.