

Subj: **To the Editor RE: Poorly researched article by Dr. Kahn**
 Date: 10/15/2016 6:00:16 P.M. Pacific Daylight Time
 From: SNK1955@aol.com
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RE: October 15, 2016 article "[YOU ARE NOT A DOCTOR Why Is the Internet So Obsessed with 'Toxic Mold'?"](#) by Farah Kahn

To the Editor,

My name is Sharon Kramer. I have a degree in marketing. I also have three medical journal publications under my belt on the subject of conflicts of interest in "nonprofit" medical associations causing misinformation of illnesses caused by biocontaminants in water damaged buildings. (lay terminology "Toxic Mold")

A little over a year ago, I was quoted by the publication WorkCompCentral on the subject. I was fortunate enough to be able to work with the medical director of US Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA), Dr. Michael Hodgson, to dispel much of the misinformation that this doctor is now promoting.

To quote from the WCC article "[ACOEM Takes Down Position Paper Commonly Used By Defense in Mold Claims](#):

"It was a litigation defense argument right from the get-go,' she [KRAMER] said. Ritchie Shoemaker, a mold researcher who has testified in more than 200 court cases related to mold illness, said the ACOEM paper was ubiquitous in litigation for many years. 'After 2003, there were no cases that I participated in where defense did not quote ACOEM,' he said....ACOEM [American College of Occupational & Environmental Medicine] representatives did not respond to multiple requests for comment. But Kramer told WorkCompCentral in an interview last week that Michael Hodgson, medical director for the U.S. Occupational Safety and Health Administration, received a statement from ACOEM's publications director [Marianne Dreger] last year that the organization would sunset the position paper in early 2015."

The advice this doctor is giving is out of date and dangerous to promote as current accepted science. It doesn't appear that she even read much before she wrote -- including the references she cited. For instance, she cites as a reference the AAAAI Mold Statement from 2006. To quote from Dr. Khan's article:

Mold worries are generally unfounded. There is no evidence that otherwise healthy individuals have any reason to fear falling ill from building mold, mold inhalation, or any other type of exposure to so-called toxic mold ([PDF](#)). [the pdf is the AAAAI Mold Statement.]

Apparently, Dr. Kahn didn't even bother reading the paper. (See her link "PDF" above) It states at the bottom of the very last page,

"AAAAI Position Statements and Work Group Reports are not to be considered to reflect current AAAAI standards or policy after five years from the date of publication.

For reference only. February 2006."

Also, I believe it's generally accepted knowledge that aspergillus is a common fungus found in water damaged buildings and it does have the capability to cause liver damage. This would be particularly true if one's immune system and liver were already (immuno) compromised from alcohol consumption.

It concerns me that this uninformed doctor is basically making fun of one of her patients, whose life is in her hands, for their asking a legitimate question about mold. To quote from the article:

Recently a patient of mine was hospitalized for liver failure due to alcohol. His history of liver disease was well documented, but he adamantly denied that anyone had warned him to avoid alcohol.

An initial confession of "a few drinks" turned into much more with a little probing by different medical providers. Despite his liver being in a significant amount of shock, he was stable and lucky enough to still have most liver function intact. After interviewing and examining him, I recapped why he had been hospitalized and explained that hospitalized for a few more days while we monitored his liver function.

As I was leaving the room, he asked me one final question: "Doc, do you think any of this has to do with the mold that was all over my old apartment building?"

Here was a patient with a damaged liver and little mystery about what had caused it, and yet here he was, with questions about... mold?

And then there's these statements:

*Even when it comes to water-damaged buildings, any medically proven associations with health issues have come with long-term occupational exposures—not household exposures....There are skin and blood-testing methods available to determine whether patients truly have mold allergies or not. Additionally, anybody who has had long-term **occupational exposure** to mold could develop a rare disease known as*

***hypersensitivity pneumonitis**, which affects lung function. But beyond these medically established connections to mold exposure and medical illnesses, much of the rest is internet lore.*

Again, it appears she didn't read the references she cites. The link "occupational exposure" is <http://www.atsjournals.org/action/showPopup?citid=citart1&id=tbl1&doi=10.1164%2Frccm.201203-0513CI> Among the causes of hypersensitivity pneumonitis (HP) from various types of mold exposures, the link discredits Dr. Kahn's statements above. The link states the following residential type exposures as causes of illness:

*"Ventilation pneumonitis; humidifier lung; air conditioner lung Contaminated forced-air systems; water reservoirs Detergent lung; washing powder lung *Bacillus subtilis* enzymes Detergents (during processing or use); Moldy wood dust; Sauna taker's lung *Aureobasidium spp.*, other sources Contaminated sauna water; Contaminated wood dust in walls; Basement shower HP; Mold on unventilated shower; Hot tub lung; Hot tub mists; mold on ceiling; Contaminated old houses; Dry rot lung; Rotten wood lung;*

*Residential provoked pneumonitis; Residential exposure; Humidifier lung;
Contaminated water from home humidifier; and Moldy shower curtain lung"*

There was recently a federal lawsuit in which the jury awarded a military family damages for brain injury caused by living in moldy military housing. The case is *Federico vs. Lincoln Military Housing*. Some of the testing this uninformed physician makes fun of in her writing was used in the case to prove that brain injury was caused by living in the NGO operated, moldy housing. To quote from the [Virginia Institute of Neuropsychology](#) website:

April 2016: NeuroQuant® and NeuroGage® admitted as evidence in court

On April 4, 2016, NeuroQuant® and NeuroGage® were admitted as evidence by Judge Raymond A. Jackson in a Federal court case in Norfolk, VA (Federico, et al. v. Lincoln Military Housing, LLD, et al.) despite the objections of defense counsel. This was the first time these brain volume measurement tools were admitted in Federal court. David E. Ross, M.D., neuropsychiatrist, testified on the neuropsychiatric aspects of mold-related illness which had affected the Federicos, including the NeuroQuant® and NeuroGage® MRI brain volume measurements. The results showed a combined pattern of brain enlargement/atrophy similar to that found in two pioneering studies published by Ritchie Shoemaker, M.D. and colleagues. The jury found in favor of the plaintiffs.

There are approximately ten additional points in this article where Dr. Khan misstates facts. She doesn't even seem to understand why the CDC recommends no testing in most cases.

This is the second misleading writing of Dr. Kahn's which has come across my desk today. The other was a tweet regarding protests at the CDC yesterday. She seems to be of the misperception that it was only what she refers to as "anti-vaxxers" who were protesting and need to "get a life".

In reality there are many people, including U.S. policy writing physicians, who are voicing concerns re: the CDC's new plans to implement mandatory vaccines and policing power to enforce them in potential pandemic situations.

I'd like to write a counter-point to this article for your publication. It's writings like this by uninformed physicians which cause many people to remain in moldy living environments while not understanding what may be causing or contributing to their adverse reactions.

It's writing like this which cause the unwitting to become unnecessarily sicker. I am appalled that this physician wrote an article making fun of her sick patient simply for asking a perfectly valid question.

Thank you,

Sharon Kramer