Reviewer's report


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Reviewer: Elihu Richter

Reviewer's report:

The investigators have done a nice job of analyzing their findings on an important topic. There is a good fit between objectives, methods, results and discussion on an important and painful problem: massive community wide occupational and familial exposures in the Palestinian agricultural environment. Methods, stats, Results, analysis of results, lit review solid and straightforward. Table 5 should go before tables 3 and 4, for obvious reasons.

Given the circumstances and context, some statements would be needed on child exposure, either in the house, or the field, given the fact that the house is right next to the field, and a lot of the mixing, etc, is done there.

The paper should also give some strong statements as to the potential for health risks from the agents, uses, modes and circumstances of exposures based on prior knowledge from elsewhere, coupled with strong statements about recommendations.

Also, the Richter-Gasteyer paper, cited by the authors, makes the point that the strongest predictor of reduction in health risk comes from substitution and reduction in use, and other papers from elsewhere cast doubt on the efficacy of whole day use of PPE in the presence of continued sloppy conditions of exposure. The authors should examine and develop this point in the context of their own circumstances.

The paper by Richter et al. in Israel Journal of Med Sciences 1992, has detailed findings on reduction in use of organophosphates applied to cotton crops followed by increase in cotton yield. This paper, which came out of the WHO-Euro OP Study, should be cited.

Pesticide Sources: In the Palestinian Authority, and elsewhere there has been a fair amount of under the counter buying and selling of illegal pesticides, both within the PA and from Israel and Jordan. This point should be addressed.

There is a need for stronger government region-wide policies to promote an emphasis on Substitution, based on models elsewhere, involving the PA, Israel and Jordan. Without such regional cooperation and regulation, the situation will remain bad.

Level of interest: An article of importance in its field
Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.

Declaration of competing interests:
I declare that I have no competing interests