Fernald Medical Monitoring Program
The Fernald Community Cohort
August, 2017
Department of Environmental Health, University of Cincinnati

What We Have Learned From the Fernald Community Cohort

Almost 80 research studies have used the database and biospecimens (stored blood and urine) of the Fernald Community Cohort (FCC) important research findings are emerging.

- Dr. Lu-Fritts, formerly of Cincinnati Children’s Hospital Medical Center, discovered a strong relationship between uranium exposure and lupus. Her research was highlighted at a national press conference.
- Dr. Tianing Wu, of UC, found that in men of the FCC, higher levels of the protein CML were present in blood plasma before a diagnosis of prostate cancer.

New discoveries also have resulted from research not related to uranium exposure. You may have heard recent media reports that persons in the greater Cincinnati area were exposed to PFOA, a chemical in the Ohio River, which is a source of our drinking water. Blood samples obtained from the time of the first monitoring program examination were used to show that high amounts of PFOA were in blood serum of many persons as far back as the early 1990s.

All of these discoveries are listed on the Publications of our website. http://med.uc.edu/eh/research/projects/fcc.

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We Need Your Help so that We Can Learn More

In order to learn more about your health, and the relationship between uranium exposure and health, we need to update the information in our files. With this newsletter you will find a short questionnaire about cancer and other types of health information. We’ve designed the questionnaire to be easy to fill out!

You’re as healthy as a horse? We really want to know that, too. The checks for “No” on the questionnaire are just as important as the “Yes” checks.

We will use this information to continue to study whether uranium exposure is related to certain health conditions. With more information, we have more statistical power—and more opportunities for new discoveries. (see pg 4.)

http://med.uc.edu/eh/research/projects/fcc
Use Sunscreen and Prevent Skin Cancer
Here’s the Best Way to Apply

When choosing a sunscreen find one that is water resistant, has an SPF of 30 or more, and has broad-spectrum coverage that will block both UVA and UVB rays. “SPF” stands for Sun Protective Factor and refers to how effectively the sun’s UVB rays are blocked. The sun also emits both UVA and UVB rays. UVB rays cause sunburn, while UVA rays are the source of other skin damage such as wrinkles and spots. Both types increase the risk of skin cancer. You need sunscreen even if you have a tan.

Check the expiration date. Expired sunscreen will not block harmful rays. Shake the bottle well and squeeze/spray into the palm of your hand. For most adults, a palm size amount of sunscreen is enough to cover the face, neck, ears, and skin that is left uncovered on a day-to-day basis. Apply evenly and thoroughly. On your face, make sure you cover the tip of your nose, the skin above your lip, and the area above the outer ends of your eyebrows. Don’t forget the top of your ears! And, if your hair is thin, the top of your head.

Your lips need protection too, but select a lip balm with a SPF that is appropriate to the season. During the winter, you probably need nothing higher than SPF 30. You will end up “eating” what you put on your lips, so be cautious so that you do not eat an excess amount of the chemicals in sunscreen.

Sunscreen works best when it has a chance to be absorbed by the skin before going into the sun. Wait 30 minutes after application to go outside. If you spend most of the day outside, reapply every two hours, or more often if there is excessive sweating. Applying sunscreen correctly and daily is a simple way to decrease the likelihood of developing melanoma. We have noted that rates of melanoma are higher in the members of the Fernald Community Cohort than the general population. As we acquire more data, we will continue to study whether the radiation from uranium exposure increased risk of developing melanoma.

The Link Between Health and Happiness

Happiness is a balance between satisfaction with the present and optimism for the future. Everyone experiences good days and bad days. It is normal for our level of happiness to fluctuate. When we experience tragedy, it can be hard to bounce back. Recovering from a negative experience can be difficult and take time, but the process worth it. Happy individuals tend to have lower blood pressures and healthier blood fat profiles.

Having a positive outlook helps us engage in healthy behaviors such as eating healthy and staying physically active. When we are optimistic, we view healthy behaviors as worth the time and effort. This explains how being happy is beneficial for not only our mental health, but our physical health as well.

http://med.uc.edu/eh/research/projects/fcc
The Fernald Community Cohort Advisory Committee

The Fernald Community Cohort Advisory Committee has a very important job. They review proposals from researchers interested in using the Cohort database and biospecimens for research studies. Researchers must first submit an application, which then is reviewed by at least two medical research scientists. The Advisory Committee considers whether the research project is scientifically sound, and whether the investigators will follow strict procedures to keep all data confidential. We do not give out any of your identifying information, such as name, address, phone number or email address.

Fernald Community Cohort Advisory Committee
Lisa Crawford
Carol Schroer
Gary Volz
Edwa Yocum

Why Should You Have a Colonoscopy

If you have not yet had a colonoscopy, it’s likely that you have heard about having one. Colonoscopies save lives. Oncologists recommend having a colonoscopy for the first time around the age of 50. Colorectal cancer is very common. It is the 4th most commonly diagnosed cancer in the US. Luckily, colorectal cancer is very preventable. Peace of mind can be reached with one 30 minute procedure every 8-10 years.

The “prep” for the procedure (emptying your bowl) is not as uncomfortable as it has been in the past. You may want to check out “Colonoscopy Prep Tips” for some very practical hints. https://www.ccalliance.org/get-screened/colonoscopy-prep-tips/

If the idea of a typical colonoscopy (in which a flexible tube with a video camera on the end takes pictures of the rectum and colon) seems too invasive, discuss your risk of colorectal cancer and the benefits of screening with your physician.

You may also want to ask your doctor about other available colon cancer screening methods. These other methods will need to be used more frequently, ranging from once a year to once every 5 years, but they are well worth the early detection of cancer.

Death Certificates: Important Records for the Fernald Community Cohort

We are working to update our records of the cause of death for persons who have died. Death certificates are important records for the Fernald Community Cohort.

You can help us in several ways. If you have a family member who has died, you can either email this information to Jeanette Buckholz at buckhojm@ucmail.uc.edu or call her at 513-558-0487. If you receive a request for a copy of the death certificate, would you please mail a copy to us in the postage pre-paid envelope?

Lou Gering’s 1941 death certificate cites as the primary cause the neurological disease that has become synonymous with his name. A collection of death certificates for notable figures can be seen here.


http://med.uc.edu/eh/research/projects/fcc
What to Tell Your Physician About Your Uranium Exposure

As you know, to be eligible for the Fernald Medical Monitoring Program, you were required to have lived (or worked) within five miles of the Fernald plant for at least two years from 1952 to 1984.

Radiation dose reconstruction studies done by CDC showed that there was a wide range of radiation exposure from the uranium at the Fernald plant. For persons who lived within one or two miles of the plant during the 1950s and 1960s, radiation exposure was several times usual background exposure. For others, the amount of exposure was within the expected variation in background exposure.

What should you tell your physician about your exposure to radiation and uranium?

- **When and where you lived near the Fernald plant.** Verify that your physician knows that exposures were greatest in the 1950s and 1960s.

- **Your drinking water source**, especially a cistern or well close to the Fernald plant. Drinking water from a cistern or a well, especially during the 1950s and 1960s, may have increased the amount of uranium that entered your body.

- **Does your doctor have questions about your uranium exposure?** Suggest that he or she call Dr. Susan Pinney, the FCC Research Director at 513-558-0684. Copies of your records from the Fernald Medical Monitoring Program are available if needed by your physician.

We Need Your Help so that We Can Learn More

We are especially interested in learning more about persons diagnosed with cancer. This information may come to us from returned questionnaires, or from Centers for Disease Control (CDC) databases such as the state cancer registries or from the National Death Index.

After we learn of a cancer diagnosis, we obtain the pathology report which provides medical information about the type of cancer. **Here is where we need your help!** We will send you, either as the patient or the next-of-kin of a patient, a medical release. After you sign the release, we can request the pathology report or other records directly related to the diagnosis of cancer. We do not request the entire medical chart.

Sometimes we also will ask you to release the tumor block, or a portion of the block, held by the hospital. Having this tiny piece of tumor tissue permits many types of research to go forward.

If you receive a request to sign a medical release and have questions, please call Jeanette Buckholz, RN, MSN, at 513-558-0487.

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