

Deadly chemical ingredient still being used

In 1941, Givaudan Corporation, a Swiss company patented a chemical compound called hexachlorophene intended to solve the problem of skin disinfection. The years following World War II saw a general and widespread use of this chemical for a multitude of purposes.

Over the years, the toxic properties of the chemical became known through "accidents". The medical profession, ecstatic about the use of hexachloro-

phene began to use it in soap form for surgeons and in 3 percent solution for use in skin disinfection in hospitals. When first introduced, the chemical was recommended for use in burn therapy. Several years later, an observant physician noted that a surprising number of burn patients were manifesting such symptoms as stupor, coma, confusion, muscular twitching, convulsions, and other effects of cerebral nervous system

poisoning.

Many hospitals continue to bathe newborn infants with 3 percent hexachlorophene soaps. Infants poisoned by improper use of hexachlorophene have shown symptoms of central nervous system injury and one case showed signs of swelling of the brain. The swelling disappeared after removal of hexachlorophene.

When Givaudan Corporation's patent expired, a number of other companies began to produce hexachlorophene. The number of suppliers of the chemical rose and the number of products has become legion. Many of the products contain the chemical for no useful purpose. For example, in addition to soaps, hexachlorophene is also used in shoe liners, underarm deodorants, shaving cream, mascara, after shave lotions, skin fresheners, astringent creams, lotions, hand creams, cold creams, freckle lotion, face powder, dusting powder, baby powder, depilatory powder, perspiration foot powder, baby scalp oil, hair dressing, permanent wave solution, dandruff tonic, detergent sanitizers, pine oil disinfectants, furnace filters, and many more whose composition is known only to the manufacturer.

RESEARCH

Eventually hexachlorophene manufacturers branched into the agricultural market. Hexachlorophene was made available as a fungicide and pesticide in the U.S.A. Ironically, the Food and

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