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Female Farmers Highly Exposed to Breast Cancer Risks

Girls who live or work on farms are permanently exposed to toxic agents, which leads to an increase in their risk of developing breast cancer symptoms

Due to the fact that they are exposed since early age to pesticides or other toxic agents, girls living or working on farms are very likely to develop breast cancer symptoms later in life. A recent study carried out by scientists at the University of Stirling found that of the women included in the research, those with breast cancer had a 3 to 1 chance to have worked or lived on a farm. Professor Andrew Watterson, one of the authors of the report published in the Annals of the New York Academy of Sciences cautioned that the current study should be seen as a tocsin for all people who live or work in media 'infested' with many toxic agents. This is especially dangerous for women who become more at risk of developing breast cancer symptoms. "Nurses and other healthcare workers are potentially exposed to ionising radiation... drugs, anaesthetic waste gases, and viruses possibly associated with cancer risk. A number of hormonally active chemicals are, or have been, used in medicine and laboratory work," warned Prof. Watterson. He also added that the group of female farmers is one of the groups of women that are the most exposed to risks of developing the fearful condition: "While occupational categories in this study serve as surrogates for exposure, it is plausible that exposure to agricultural chemicals is a causative factor. Because many women who worked in farming began during adolescence, it is plausible the timing of exposure is of significance in terms of risk." The study run by University of Stirling team involved 1,100 women, out of which a half were breast cancer patients. Researchers found that breast cancer sufferers' - 550 women - were 3 times more likely to have worked or lived on a farm. "The results indicate that women with breast cancer were nearly three times more likely to have worked in agriculture when compared to the controls. Although the individual contribution of automotive-related manufacturing alone was not significant, the risk for those who worked in agriculture and subsequently worked in automotive-related manufacturing was further elevated," pointed out Prof. Watterson. However, medical experts at the Cancer Research UK stated that the study was conducted on a too small number of women to provide strong evidence for further firm conclusions and decisions. Henry Scowcroft, the Science Information Officer for Cancer Research UK stated: "This study only looked at a relatively small number of women. This is too small a group to be able to draw any firm conclusions about a possible link". "Nor does it say anything at all about what might be behind the observed increase in risk for some occupations. Scientists have also looked at whether environmental toxins might also contribute to the increase in breast cancer, but have found no conclusive link."