

GOVERNMENT OF THE DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA
Department of Health

Medical Affairs



September 3, 2002

Dear Colleague,

As you may be aware, there has been an ongoing investigation into the presence and possible effects of arsenic and other toxic substances in Spring Valley Neighborhoods in Washington DC. There is ongoing remediation work being conducted and planned for by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers (USACE), and a District of Columbia Mayor's Spring Valley Scientific Advisory Panel was empanelled to review and recommend these and other activities.

In responding to residents concerns regarding exposure to arsenic and other contaminants in the Spring Valley neighborhoods, the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry (ATSDR) in cooperation with the District of Columbia Department of Health undertook an exposure investigation and analysis of persons whose homes had the highest arsenic levels in composite soil samples taken from their yard. Additionally the District of Columbia Cancer Registry undertook an analysis of possible arsenic related malignancies reported from the District of Columbia over the preceding fifteen (15) years.

Although there has been no evidence of an unusually high rate of arsenic related illnesses among residents of Spring Valley neighborhoods, the Panel has recommended that the Department of Health establish a surveillance system to obtain a 'rapid suspected case count'. The target population is persons who live in the Spring Valley neighborhoods of Northwest Washington D.C. and the emphasis is on 'arsenic-related' diseases.

As an identified potential provider of residents of Spring Valley neighborhoods we are asking you to report any such suspected cases that you may see in your practice to the D.C. Department of Health at 202-442-9196. This record will include time, place, and person along with the reporting physician name. Clinical details of suspected cases are not being collected. I am always available to discuss any physician clinical concerns at 202-442-9196.

Thank you for your continuing partnership with the Department of Health as we work to improve the health and safety of all our residents.

Sincerely,

Handwritten signature of Michael S.A. Richardson.

Michael S.A. Richardson, MD, FACP
Senior Deputy Director
Medical Affairs