

World Health Organization Won't Back Down From Study Linking Monsanto to Cancer

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Theme: [Biotechnology and GMO](#), [Science and Medicine](#)

The scientists behind a recent World Health Organization study which concluded the herbicide glyphosate “probably” causes cancer, say they stand behind their assessment. The comments come in response to criticisms from Monsanto Co., who said the study was based on “junk science”. The main ingredient in Monsanto’s Round Up product is glyphosate. Monsanto executives said they are reviewing their options as they move forward.

Aaron Blair, a scientist emeritus at the National Cancer Institute and lead author of the study, [told Reuters](#), “There was sufficient evidence in animals, limited evidence in humans and strong supporting evidence showing DNA mutations and damaged chromosomes.” The WHO’s International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC) published their study of glyphosate on March 20, finding that the popular herbicide may contribute to non-hodgkins lymphoma.

IARC report was [published](#) in The Lancet Oncology detailing evaluations of organophosphate pesticides and herbicides. The report concluded that there was “limited evidence of carcinogenicity in humans for non-Hodgkin lymphoma.” The evidence for this conclusion was pulled from studies of exposure to the chemical in the US, Canada and Sweden published since 2001.

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The researchers found “convincing evidence that glyphosate can also cause cancer in laboratory animals.” The report points out that the United States Environmental Protection Agency (US EPA) had originally classified glyphosate as possibly carcinogenic to humans in 1985. The IARC Working Group evaluated the original EPA findings and more recent reports before concluding “there is sufficient evidence of carcinogenicity in experimental animals.” Despite the WHO’s findings, the EPA approved Monsanto’s use of glyphosate as recently as 2013.

The battle around glyphosate is also closely linked to the debate around Genetically Engineered or Modified foods. The herbicide is typically used on GM crops such as corn and soybeans that have been specifically modified to survive the harmful effects of the herbicide. Corporations like Monsanto are heavily invested in the success of the chemical. The herbicide has been found in food, water, and in the air in areas where it has been sprayed.

In 2014 [Anti-Media reported](#) on a [study](#) published in the [International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health](#) which claims to have found a link between glyphosate and the fatal Chronic Kidney Disease of Unknown origin (CKDu), which largely affects rice farmers in Sri Lanka and other nations. In response Sri Lanka has banned glyphosate and Brazil is considering doing the same.

Sri Lanka's Minister of Special Projects S.M. Chandrasena stated that [President Mahinda Rajapaksa issued a directive](#) to ban glyphosate sales in the country. "An investigation carried out by medical specialists and scientists have revealed that kidney disease was mainly caused by glyphosate. [President Mahinda Rajapaksa has ordered the immediate removal of glyphosate](#) from the local market soon after he was told of the contents of the report."

The researchers believe glyphosate could be helping carry toxic heavy metals present in certain agri-chemicals to the kidneys. Chronic kidney disease of unknown etiology (CKDu) was first seen in the north central areas of Sri Lanka in the 1990s and has taken an estimated 20,000 lives. Before being pushed by Monsanto for use as herbicide, glyphosate was a de-scaling agent to clean mineral deposits in hot water systems.

Although the paper did not offer new scientific evidence, the researchers proposed a theory for how CKDu is spread. The researchers believe that glyphosate is contributing to a rise of heavy metals in drinking water. Dr. Channa Jayasumana, lead author of the study said, "*glyphosate acts as a carrier or a vector of these heavy metals to the kidney.*" Glyphosate itself is not the toxic agent, however when combined with metals in the ground water the herbicide becomes extremely toxic to the kidneys.

In recent years there has been a spike in CKDu patients in farming areas of El Salvador, Nicaragua, and Costa Rica.

The Minister stated that a [new national program would be launched](#) encouraging Sri Lankan farmers to use organic fertilizer. The Ministry of Agriculture is hoping to plant 100,000 acres of land throughout the country using organic methods.

Monsanto spokesman Thomas Helscher stated, "*There are no epidemiologic studies suggesting that exposures to glyphosate-based products are associated with renal disorders either in Sri Lanka or elsewhere. The paper presents a theory, the theory has not been tested, and there are a significant number of publications supported by data that make the Jayasumana hypothesis quite unlikely to be correct.*" Despite promises from Monsanto, the evidence indicating dangers related to glyphosate continue to pile up.

With the USDA's decision late last year to [approve a new batch of genetically modified corn and soybean seeds](#) designed to be resistant to glyphosate, we should expect to see an increase in herbicide use overall, and with it, many disastrous health effects. In fact, the approval by the USDA now partners DOW Chemical and Monsanto together, a move which will only further entrench the control that corporate entities have over governments.

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