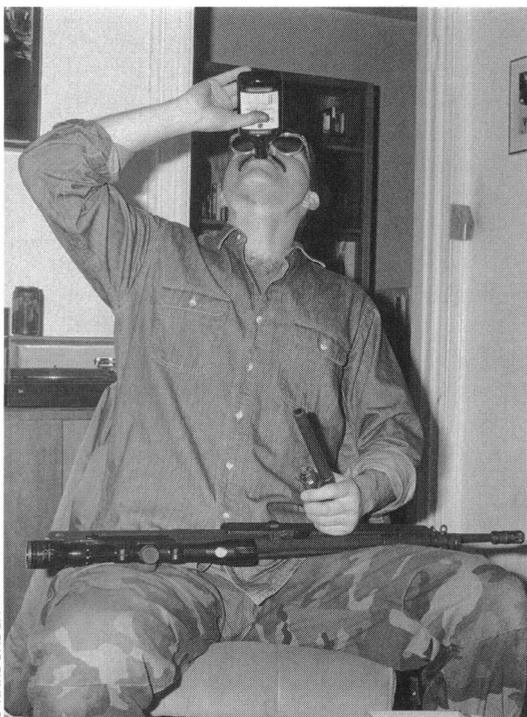


# LETTERS

## Photo Essay

I am writing to compliment your journal for publishing one of the most dramatic and effective articles that I have ever seen.



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The photo essay by Karl Baden, "From Social Drinking...to Public Problems" [Public Health Rep 1999; 114:236-241], was provoking in its starkness. It is the simplicity of the horrors displayed and inferred that carry such impact.

Kudos to your staff for choosing this terse display.

*Henry Harris, MD  
Acting Director of Health and  
Medical Advisor  
City of Stamford (CT)  
Department of Health ■*

## Pesticide Safety Training

In the article "Implementation of EPA's Worker Protection Standard Training for Agricultural Laborers:

An Evaluation Using North Carolina Data" [Public Health Rep 1999; 114: 459-68], Arcury et al. expose an important issue in that state. Their findings confirm anecdotal evidence suggesting that the implementation

of the Worker Protection Standard (WPS) training has not fulfilled its promise to create a safer environment for farmworkers. The characteristics of pesticide safety training and the limited knowledge that farmworkers have about agricultural chemicals as reported in this article are especially striking when one considers the alarming rate of occupational exposure to pesticides among migrant and seasonal farmworkers in the United States. Data from California's mandatory reporting system imply a national average of 10,000 to 20,000 cases of farmworker pesticide poisonings annually.<sup>1</sup> However many consider this a serious underestimate due to both the lack of medical access for farmworkers and clinical misdiagnoses.<sup>2</sup>

Furthermore, Arcury et al. point out the important role the grower plays in complying with WPS regulations. The authors note that many growers do not believe the degree to which their workers are exposed to pesticides. The goal of the PACE (Preventing Agricultural Chemical Exposure among North Carolina Farmworkers) project is to investigate how to develop, implement, and evaluate culturally appropriate ways of reducing farmworkers' exposure to chemicals in the workplace. Hopefully this includes interventions aimed at growers, whose compliance and cooperation are essential to the

success of WPS regulations. More research needs to be done to understand what knowledge, attitudes, and practices on the part of growers either promote or prohibit safer farm environments for their workers. The results of such research should be used to design culturally appropriate educational interventions targeting growers. The advantages of such innovative approaches to educating growers about pesticide risks and harm reduction are twofold. In the short term they will better enable growers to foster safer environments on their farms, and in the long term they are likely to decrease their legal liability.

The baseline information revealed in this article is sobering. Although PACE has taken the initiative in developing innovative ways of implementing WPS training, a multifaceted approach is necessary to thoroughly address occupational pesticide exposure among farmworkers. It is essential that the farmworker organizing, advocacy, and regulatory community respond to the results presented in this article. Responses should include more training on recognition and management of pesticide poisoning for clinicians who treat farmworkers, more resources directed at enforcement, implementation, and evaluation of WPS regulations, and further development of innovative educational interventions directed at both farmworkers and farmers. The findings reported in this article also underscore the urgent need for expansive outreach to all farmworkers, including those working with and without H2A visas.

The Migrant Health Program of the Bureau of Primary Health Care in the Health Resources and Services Administration supports organizations working to educate clinicians serving migrant and seasonal farm-