



Summary

Raising Awareness and Reducing Exposure: Educating for Safer Environments

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Dr. Caroline Barakat's presentation at the *RESILIENCE* Conference, titled "Raising Awareness and Reducing Chemical Exposures: Educating for Safer and Accessible Environments," focused on the health risks posed by common chemicals found in personal care and household products, particularly for individuals with Multiple Chemical Sensitivity (MCS). The presentation examined how limited regulations and public awareness contribute to ongoing exposure to harmful substances, including parabens, phthalates, triclosan, lead, BPA, and perchloroethylene.

Dr. Barakat shared the results of two research studies. The first examined public perceptions, beliefs, and behaviours related to chemical exposure, revealing that knowledge and risk awareness strongly influence behaviour change. The second study evaluated the effectiveness of an educational toolkit, "Paraben-Free & Me," developed to inform women about the risks of parabens and encourage safer consumer choices. This toolkit was based on behaviour change models and delivered via an interactive digital platform.

Findings demonstrated that increased awareness led to modest improvements in avoidance behaviours and confirmed that sociodemographic factors—such as income, education, and ethnicity—play a significant role in how individuals perceive and respond to chemical risks. The presentation concluded by emphasizing the importance of education, accessibility, and policy advocacy in reducing chemical exposures and supporting affected communities. Future research aims to expand the toolkit and assess its impact using biological and environmental measures.



Citations

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