

To Start or Not to Start? That Is the Question

National Institute of Statistical Sciences: Ingram Olkin Statistics Serving Society Forum

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Centers for Disease Control and Prevention

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Background

- **CDC**
- **ATSDR**
- **Associate Director for Science**

Per- and Polyfluoroalkyl Substances (PFAS)

- **Large class of man-made chemicals.**
- **Most common:**
 - perfluorooctanoic acid (PFOA).
 - perfluorooctane sulfonic acid (PFOS).
- **Most people in the U.S. have PFAS in their blood.**

PFAS (continued)

Exposure to high levels of certain PFAS may lead to:

- Increased cholesterol levels.
- Increased risk of high blood pressure/pre-eclampsia in pregnant women.
- Increased risk of kidney, testicular cancers.
- Decreased vaccine response in children.
- Small decreases in infant birth weight.
- Changes in liver enzymes.

PFAS Exposure Assessment (EA)

- **Test blood, urine for determining exposure.**
- **Test environmental samples (indoor dust, tap water).**
- **Implement questionnaire to identify sources.**
- **May inform future studies.**

PFAS EA (continued)

- **Site selection based on factors, including exposure via drinking water and location near current/former military base.**
- **Collected data at 5 sites by March 11, 2020.**
- **Paused field work March 12.**

PFAS EA Interlude

- **Discussions in May with principal investigator, program on restart.**
- **No precedent, no CDC guidelines.**
- **Engagement with CDC Office of Director.**

Key Issues, Considerations for Restart

- **Safety**
- **Prioritizing COVID-19**
- **Human subjects risks/benefits**
- **Scientific urgency**
- **Scientific integrity**
- **Burden on state, local partners**
- **Jurisdiction COVID-19 policies**
- **Impact on public health for communities and individuals**

PFAS EA Restart Process

- **Coordinate with CDC's:**
 - **Office of Safety, Security, and Asset Management**
 - **National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health**
 - **Science and Surveillance Subgroup**
 - **Office of Director**

- **Perform clearance through:**
 - environmental health Office of Science
 - Emergency Operations Center

- **Synchronize with development of CDC guidelines**

Implementation of PFAS EA Restart

- **Coordinate with ATSDR Regional Offices, and state and local offices.**
- **Ensure laboratory readiness.**
- **Develop, implement communication plan.**
- **Schedule community meetings, blood and urine collection, environmental sampling, implementation of questionnaire.**
- **Resume contract.**
- **Identify, mobilize field staff.**

Impact of COVID-19 on PFAS EA

- **Levels of exposure**
- **Expectations**
- **Participation**
- **Sample design**
- **Data analysis**
- **Inferences**

Lessons Learned

- **Need for increased preparedness.**
- **Need for higher level of flexibility.**
- **Successful use of virtual options.**

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For more information, contact NCEH/ATSDR
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