



**CHE Café: Science, Storytelling & A New War on Cancer**  
Co-hosted with The New School at Commonweal  
and presented in partnership with Breast Cancer Prevention Partners  
*Webinar, June 13, 2023*

**Q&A**

*The webinar audience posed a number of questions. Below are the speakers' answers to questions they did not have time to address during the webinar.*

**Q:** Can you talk about whether and/or how you collaborate with attorneys looking to help people adversely impacted by polluters, particularly children and environmental justice communities?

**A:** We (CEHN, Cancer Free Economy Network, etc.) work with community organizations and collaborations. Often we are a connector to those who are in need of legal guidance. We keep track of those leaders willing to be connected as needed to talk further with community leaders working on legal actions.

**Q:** Many carcinogens are not yet listed by EPA or IARC. Which unlisted carcinogen is Nsedu most concerned about in terms of the risk posed to children?

**A:** All of these carcinogens concern me:  
<https://www.oregon.gov/oha/ph/healthyenvironments/healthyneighborhoods/toxicsubstances/pages/childrens-chemicals-of-concern.aspx>

**Q:** Are you aware of the data on asbestos water pipes and, if yes, is any action being taken on this? A recent W-5 program discussed this. The link can be found on the Prevent Cancer Now website (<https://preventcancer.org>)

**A:** I am aware and also concerned about the replacement piping that we are using to replace old lead pipes. Asbestos fibers are linked to mesothelioma and other conditions. CEH works with our Lead Service Replacement Collaborative to make sure that we emphasize the importance of replacement piping. However, I do think more education on this concern is very needed, especially with plumbing associations, water utilities, and public health leaders.

**Q:** Can you say something about stress as a cause for cancer? It is part of the socio-economic environment we live in.

**A:** Cancer and Stress: <https://www.cancer.gov/about-cancer/coping/feelings/stress-fact-sheet>

I have seen studies with mixed reviews to cancer caused by chronic stress. Even when stress appears to be linked to cancer risk, the relationship could be indirect. For example, people under chronic stress may develop certain unhealthy behaviors, such as smoking, diet, sedentary lifestyle, drinking alcohol, that are themselves associated with increased risks of some cancers. I would add that the environmental stress many communities suffer from daily may be the stronger association, which then causes other forms of stress.

**Q:** For Kristina and Sandra, how difficult was it to find a publisher for your books? Did you work with an agent?

**A:** From Kristina: My process was a little unusual. I wrote a [5-part series](#) on cancer and the environment for *Environmental Health News* in 2019 that won a few journalism awards. I got a lovely note from an editor at Island Press congratulating me on the awards and asking if I'd ever be interested in expanding that reporting into a national investigation in a book. Four years later, this is that book! I didn't work with an agent; instead I worked directly with the publisher, and I had help from my sister, who is an attorney, navigating and negotiating my contract.

**Q:** How can we persuade other chemically focused NGOs about the links between environmental and occupational risk factors and cancer? After 25 years still having to do this, it's exhausting. Tips welcome!

**A:** From Kristina: There's a really robust body of research on this at this point, with lots of meta-analyses. The [Cancer Free Economy Network](#) is doing a great job of compiling the science. I'd point people toward their resources (or my book).

**Q:** Building on the recognition that we are exposed to many contributors to cancer (not only "recognized, known" carcinogens), how do you expand the exposures of concern? At [preventcancer.org](http://preventcancer.org) we advocate choosing best-practice, least-toxic options. Dealing rigorously with the plethora of pesticides and various chemicals seems to us, and to me (as a scientist) to be untenable. Please comment on shifting approaches to what is in everyday products, food, air, water, and food?

**A:** From Kristina: I discuss this at length in the book. This problem is so ubiquitous we can't shop our way out of it as individuals. We need better chemical regulations that will protect everyone at once, rather than telling people this all depends on their individual consumer choices.