

22.03.01

14 Deputy R.J. Ward of the Chief Minister regarding exposure to PFOS and PFAS (OQ.40/2022)

The Chief Minister is not here, so who should I be addressing this to?

The Bailiff:

It will be the Deputy Chief Minister.

Deputy R.J. Ward:

Will the Deputy Chief Minister advise whether there is any evidence obtained to date to indicate a causal relationship between P.F.O.S. (perfluorooctane sulfonate) or P.F.A.S. (perfluoroalkyl substance) exposure and any significant impact on health?

Senator L.J. Farnham (Deputy Chief Minister):

I am pleased to say that the Deputy of St. Peter will take that question in his capacity as an Assistant Chief Minister.

Deputy R.E. Huelin of St. Peter (Assistant Chief Minister - rapporteur):

I must congratulate the Deputy on trying to use the full name as opposed to just the acronyms. I have been struggling with it for years. Although the current reviews of health and scientific research provide fairly consistent reports of associations with several health outcomes, there is no conclusive evidence to suggest P.F.O.S. causes a significant impact on an individual's health. It should be noted that there are very few high-quality well-designed studies, which could give reliable results on this subject. There is some suggestive evidence that exposure to P.F.A.S. can be associated with increased blood cholesterol, although the differences are small and may not be significant to individual level health. Evidence for other adverse health outcomes are generally limited but these conditions include higher levels of uric acid in the blood, reduced kidney function or kidney disease or kidney cancer, testicular cancer, alterations in immune response, specifically impactful on vaccine-derived immunity for diphtheria and rubella. Other health conditions have been studied or are mentioned in the literature about P.F.O.S. but the evidence is low-quality and therefore difficult to interpret.

3.14.1 Deputy R.J. Ward:

The original statement that had people wanting to be tested, G.P.s and patients were asked to agree, there is no evidence for causal evidence. That has now been removed. How did that statement come about and what was the purpose of that statement being passed to G.P.s and patients who may want to be tested for their exposure to these chemicals?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

By way of statement you are saying what was the rationale to invite members of the plume area for testing. Can I confirm that was the question?

Deputy R.J. Ward:

It was more the statement that was originally attached that took away any belief in a causal link to illness.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

What is clear is that P.F.A.S. has been a concern for those residents for many, many years; 25 to 30 years. To date, up until the decision by the Chief Minister, those residents had ultimately been ignored. The purpose of this is to bring to the fore and recognise the concern of those residents in a formal way by inviting them to have their blood levels tested.

[11:45]

3.14.2 Deputy C.S. Alves:

Can the Assistant Minister advise what is the cost of the tests and what is the timespan for receiving the results?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I believe the overall cost for each test is close to £900 to £1,000. That is a combination of obviously the G.P. appointment being covered, the cost with H.C.S. to collect the blood in a very, very controlled way, it is not just as simple as going and giving blood as you would normally do at your G.P., and also going to a specialist laboratory in California that has been set up specifically to monitor this family of P.F.O.S., of which there are many thousands.

3.14.3 Deputy C.S. Alves:

What has the take-up been for this?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I do not know the answer to that question. One of the guidelines I said to the residents was: "Please do not go to your G.P.s tomorrow because there is a period of time by which we must advise the G.P.s and alert them to make sure they have a full understanding of what they are going to do when the first patient comes in and requests the test.

3.14.4 Deputy R.J. Ward:

Can I ask the Assistant Chief Minister, how does the deed giving Government £2.6 million in 2005, which for ever releases, acquits, discharges, and covenants, not to sue 3M or any 3M entity in relation to any and all airport claims, affect the outcomes and ways to support Islanders affected with exposure to these substances?

The Deputy of St. Peter:

I do not know in Standing Orders whether I can call on the help of the A.G. (Attorney General) with this one.

The Bailiff:

Sorry, no, you cannot. There is no facility to seek legal advice. But if you take it to be a legal point that you are not in a position to answer then that is an answer of itself.

The Deputy of St. Peter:

Thank you, if I may answer in that way, thank you.