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Health Protection
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Bureau of Cardio-Respiratory Diseases and Diabetes

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[REDACTED]

March 8, 1999

Dear [REDACTED]

Re: Environmental Illness

Thank you for your telephone call this morning, enquiring about the position of the Laboratory Centre for Disease Control (LCDC), Health Canada, on issues related to environmental illness.

Environmental illness is a complex and controversial issue. It presents with a broad range of symptoms. The clinical presentation overlaps with that of many other conditions, e.g. allergies, asthma, chronic fatigue syndrome, fibromyalgia, "Gulf War illness", and "sick building syndrome". Sufferers attribute their symptoms to a wide range of substances in their indoor and outdoor environments.

This issue is controversial because there is no consensus on a scientific definition of environmental illness. There is no scientific consensus on any valid diagnostic test. There is no consensus on effective treatment in the medical community.

Because of the relative lack of scientific knowledge on environmental illness, Health Canada would encourage further efforts towards the identification and resolution of these issues. The Laboratory Centre for Disease Control is in the process of establishing a small working group of experts in this area to advise Health Canada on how to best promote health professionals' awareness and facilitate research funding in environmental illness.

Yours sincerely,

Bernard Choi, PhD
Chief Epidemiologist