

# THE IMPORTANCE OF EDUCATING THE GENERAL POPULATION ON HEALTH RISKS ASSOCIATED WITH BUILDING AND FURNISHING MATERIALS

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In recent years more information has become available on possible adverse health effects associated with some building and furnishing materials. Consequently legislative changes towards their elimination or reduction in use have been initiated in many parts of the world. This paper proposes that any efforts towards improvement should also include consideration of the level of knowledge in the general population.

In a recent study (Petrovic 2014), 182 participants in three samples of the general populations of New Zealand, the United States of America and the United Kingdom, were asked to rate a number of building and furnishing materials for their perceived impact on human health. The results indicate that there are significant issues with the level of reported knowledge. One of the strongest trends in all samples was that the participants struggled to differentiate between materials with similar appearance but different chemical compositions and possible impacts on health, such as vinyl and linoleum, and particleboard and MDF with and without formaldehyde. These findings are especially disconcerting given that formaldehyde and phthalate plasticizers are currently in process of legislative elimination in Europe and the USA. .

This paper will present a summary of the most significant findings of this study and problematize the issues associated with the relationship between the general population and indoor air quality in private spaces such as homes. It is proposed that an increase in the level of knowledge in the general population about the health risks associated with building and furnishing materials could make a significant contribution to improvements in indoor air quality.

## References:

Petrović, Emina. 2014. Building Materials and Health: a study of perceptions of the healthiness of building and furnishing materials in homes. Unpublished PhD thesis. Wellington: Victoria University of Wellington.

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