

Presentation 6 – Ritchie C. Shoemaker, MD

The Clear Link from Mold Exposure to Human Illness: What You Need to Know

ABSTRACT: The controversy surrounding the claims of human health effects following exposure to indoor, toxigenic fungi continues largely due to the absence of sound scientific studies that support the contention that mold makes some people sick. Today, Ritchie C. Shoemaker MD will present 156 patients from 150 buildings with water damage in a study that answers the methodological concerns regarding putative illness from toxin forming molds. Included is a large control group of patients for comparison, a tightly structured case definition, 11 different robust biomarkers, including genetic susceptibility factors, absence of confounding exposures, response to treatment with abatement of symptoms and reduction of abnormalities in physiologic biomarkers, and prospective confirmation of causation of illness using a repetitive exposure protocol. It is the ability to treat the biotoxin-associated illness that others call Sick Building Syndrome that permits careful physiologic delineation of the illness. Shoemaker's work with biotoxin-associated illnesses provides a framework for understanding by the non-physician of the complex symptoms and laboratory abnormalities present in patients with mold exposure. He suggests simple, inexpensive measures to detect the presence of human illness in populations of at-risk patients as well as mechanisms that support an active risk management program. While no single paper will end the medical and legal arguments about mold and human health, these data strongly support an approach that secures the clear link between exposure to toxigenic fungi and human health.

BIOGRAPHY: Ritchie C. Shoemaker MD is a practicing family physician from Pocomoke, Md, a rural community on the Eastern Shore. Named Maryland Family Practice Physician of Year in 2000, and runner-up for the National award in 2002, he has combined an interest in diagnosis and treating chronic illnesses caused by exposure to biologically produced neurotoxins (biotoxins) with an ongoing primary care practice since 1980. He graduated magna cum laude from Duke in 1973 and stayed at Duke Med School, graduating in 1977. He is board certified in Family Practice. Shoemaker's work with the biotoxin-forming dinoflagellate *Pfiesteria piscicida* was recently featured in a Discovery Health TV program, "Dangerous Catch." He has written four books, including *Pfiesteria: Crossing Dark Water, Lose the Weight You Hate*, and his primer in biotoxin illnesses, *Desperation Medicine*. Currently in production is *Mold Warriors*, a book that will chronicle the uphill medical and legal battle to prove human illness is caused by exposure to indoor resident toxigenic fungal species. Shoemaker has published numerous articles that provide an academic basis for the clear link from exposure to "toxic mold" and human health, with a peer reviewed presentation at the 5th International Conference on Bioaerosols, Fungi, Bacteria, Mycotoxins and Human Health, 9/10/03, which reported a series of 156 patients from 150 buildings, 11 biomarkers and response to treatment with a diagnostic, repetitive exposure protocol that provides evidence of causation. Shoemaker has provided expert witness testimony in biotoxin cases from 15 states. More information is available from www.chronicneurotoxins.com, or from the non-profit Center for Research on Biotoxin Associated Illnesses, Pocomoke, Md, 410-957-1550.