Dr. Robert Geller • Healthy Schools and Daycare

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He is a Fellow of the American Academy of Pediatrics, the American College of Medical Toxicology, and the American Academy of Clinical Toxicology. He has been a member of the Emory Southeast Pediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) since its formation in 2001. He is the author of more than 50 publications and is one of the editors of the text Safe and Healthy School Environments. He has met with community members at many sites of children's environmental health concern throughout the Southeastern United States.

Discussion Notes

"Environment" includes air, water, and soil, but also social interactions, media, and built spaces. To improve environmental health in schools, we can think about addressing playgrounds, the foods students eat, and temperature, lighting, and humidity in buildings. Improvements on these factors can minimize anxiety and optimize learning and performance, especially for marginalized students. Physical activities—dancing and cycling, for example—can also help students improve behavior.

Identifying significant and immediate hazards is a good place to start: peeling lead paint, rodenticide, unsafe cleaning supplies, poor food handling, and chemical contamination are major concerns. Encourage schools to use "green" chemicals, which are not necessarily more expensive.

Focus on ways to improve environmental awareness. How can we educate kids about environmental health? What role can parents and community groups play?

TAKE-HOME POINTS

Children spend much of their time at home or day care.

The environment in which children live affects their health and development: the outdoors, the indoor built environment, and their parents, teachers, other people, and the media.

Optimizing the child's environment can improve future health and productivity.

KEY WORDS: school, daycare, environment, built environment

RESOURCES: http://emory.edu/pehsu