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9 Questions with WRG authors

Title of the paper: Human Health Risk from Consumption of Marine Fish Contaminated with DDT and its Metabolites in Maputo Bay, Mozambique

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Photo by: L. Thompson

[Lesa Thompson, MA BVM&S MSc](#)



1. What previous work was integral to the new study?

Previous research by the WRG and collaborators has shown contamination of the environment and biota by DDTs in regions where the chemical is sprayed to control malaria.





2. Why do you care about this particular subject?

The use of chemicals like DDT in malaria control is a contentious one, as DDT controls mosquitoes (which transmit malaria) well in most areas, but DDTs are known to have toxic effects in many species (including people). This study aimed to assess the extent of environmental contamination in marine fish and the potential health risk to people consuming them.



3. Did any of the findings surprise you?

Although they are top predators, levels of DDTs in barracuda sampled did not show an increased health risk to people consuming them.



4. What are some of the limitations of this study?

The sample size was relatively small and did not test all fish species in the area. For example, local people eat smaller fish species that were not analysed in this study.



5. Do you expect these findings to be controversial in your field?

Detection of potentially toxic chemicals in food sources is always a concern for the population.



6. What are the broader implications of these findings?

Certain species of fish carry a greater level of contamination and thus pose a greater potential health risk from consumption.



7. What do people usually get wrong about this subject?

Contamination of the environment doesn't always just occur at the site of application – in this case, DDTs likely travel considerable distances in aquatic biota.



8. Looking back on the study, what were some of the most memorable moments for you and your colleagues?

Conducting questionnaires with a local guide enabled me to gain a greater understanding of the lifestyle of local people, which is key to understanding their health risks, and their healthcare needs for malaria control and treatment.





9. What are you working on next?

I am investigating the effects of contamination by DDTs in wild birds.



Thank you for your time, Lesa!



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