

The Patients' Voice -- Spring 1998

#### Part 1: Dairy Cows and Their Milk

How safe are the dairy products in our grocery stores? Ronnie Cummins of Pure Food Campaign, has said:

...80 percent of supermarket milk contained traces of either medicines, illegal antibiotics used on farms, or hormones, including genetically engineered bovine growth hormone.

The use of hormones and the excessive use of antibiotics by the dairy industry are causes for concern.

#### Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone

No long-term studies have been done on the health-related effects of Recombinant Bovine Growth Hormone (rBGH). This genetically-engineered substance is injected every two weeks into some of the dairy herds in at least 25 countries (including the US), to increase milk production.

The Canadian government, alerted by Canadian scientists, has again denied approval for this synthetic hormone. Gary Barton of Monsanto says that his company plans to challenge this decision. He also claims that the US market for the hormone is growing at 30% per year. In Europe, rBGH, also known as bovine (BST) is prohibited until the year 2000.

#### Cancer Risk

Cows injected with this genetically-engineered hormone produce milk that is higher in Insulin-like Growth Factor-one (IGF-1). Researchers are divided on what effect this has on cancer risk.

According to some scientists, increased levels of this hormone are associated with breast, prostate, and colon tumors. Canadian scientists, who recently examined data from a 90-day study, found that 20-30 percent of the rats had developed antibodies. Antibodies to a hormone prove that the active form has reached the blood stream. Some of these rats developed thyroid tumors.

Scientists who defend rBGH claim that it is identical to a hormone normally found in the human body, and that there is no evidence the consumption of IGF-1 in foods contributes to cancer risk. They offer no long-term studies to prove that there is no such connection.

1. Cited by Oden, Nancy; "Should Chemical Corporations Control Food Crops?" Bangor Daily News, Bangor, Maine, 10/30/98