

# Congress of the United States

## House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON SCIENCE, SPACE, AND TECHNOLOGY

2321 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6301

(202) 225-6371  
[www.science.house.gov](http://www.science.house.gov)

November 1, 2017

Dr. Christopher P. Wild  
Director  
IARC  
150 Cours Albert Thomas  
69372 Lyon CEDEX, 08  
France

Dear Dr. Wild:

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology is conducting oversight of the International Agency for Research on Cancer's (IARC) Monograph Programme (IMO). According to the NIH database, since 1985, IARC received over \$48 million<sup>1</sup> from NIH, over \$22 million<sup>2</sup> of which went to the IARC Monographs on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans. This Committee has an interest in ensuring scientific integrity and honest stewardship of American taxpayer dollars.

Recent news media reporting has revealed troubling evidence of data deletion, manipulation, and potential conflicts of interest with Monograph 112 on glyphosate. Additionally, there seems to be a lack of transparency in the science used to justify the findings on glyphosate. In its March 2015 report, IARC categorized glyphosate as a Group 2A carcinogen, meaning that the substance "probably" causes cancer in people.<sup>3</sup> However, recent investigatory efforts revealed that substantial portions of the chapter focusing on animal studies were altered, either through deletion or manipulation. There were several instances where study conclusions that failed to support the carcinogenic nature of glyphosate were deleted.<sup>4</sup> These

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<sup>1</sup>Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools, [https://projectreporter.nih.gov/Reporter\\_Viewsh.cfm?sl=12EFCF0E4D8AC3D27598B8961CAA4A01A2FFCEB861BF](https://projectreporter.nih.gov/Reporter_Viewsh.cfm?sl=12EFCF0E4D8AC3D27598B8961CAA4A01A2FFCEB861BF).

<sup>2</sup> Research Portfolio Online Reporting Tools, "Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans," [https://projectreporter.nih.gov/project\\_info\\_history.cfm?aid=9334069&icde=36612010](https://projectreporter.nih.gov/project_info_history.cfm?aid=9334069&icde=36612010).

<sup>3</sup> International Agency for Research on Cancer, *Some Organophosphate Insecticides and Herbicides/IARC Working Group on the Evaluation of Carcinogenic Risks to Humans*, vol. 112 (2015), available at <http://monographs.iarc.fr/ENG/Monographs/vol112/mono112.pdf>.

<sup>4</sup> Kate Kelland, *In glyphosate review, WHO cancer agency edited out "non-carcinogenic" findings*, REUTERS, Oct. 19, 2017, available at <http://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/who-iarc-glyphosate/>.

conclusions were deleted from the final monograph, despite IARC's assurance that it strives "to achieve the highest degree of scientific authority and trust in these evaluations."<sup>5</sup>

According to the investigation, six comments that remarked on the lack of connection between glyphosate and cancer were deleted from the report. These comments were replaced with the statement: "The Working Group was not able to evaluate this study because of the limited experimental data provided in the review article and supplemental information."<sup>6</sup> Even studies that clearly concluded "glyphosate . . . was not carcinogenic" were cited as "sufficient" evidence of glyphosate as a carcinogen in animals.<sup>7</sup> Out of the ten-page chapter on animal studies, there are ten significant changes when comparing the final IARC monograph and the draft version.<sup>8</sup> This animal studies chapter is the only portion of the glyphosate assessment that was investigated.<sup>9</sup> The rest of the 92-page report is covered by a confidentiality order.<sup>10</sup> The Committee wonders how many significant changes and deletions there were in the remaining pages.

The news media contacted sixteen of the scientists who worked on the glyphosate IMO for answers as to who altered the final report and why the deletions were made. The five scientists who responded refused to answer any questions.<sup>11</sup> In fact, after these manipulations were uncovered, IARC instructed scientists involved with the working group "not to feel pressured to discuss their deliberations."<sup>12</sup> Rather than encourage its scientists to be transparent with the public, IARC chose to ignore those who are affected by policy decisions that are shaped by the glyphosate monograph.

Throughout the review process for the monograph, IARC, the only agency to characterize glyphosate as "probably" a carcinogen, has kept drafts of its glyphosate report confidential. The other agencies that conducted review of glyphosate, such as the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the European Food Safety Authority (EFSA), were open about their processes, publishing information regarding public comments and draft reviews.<sup>13</sup> Moreover, in June of this year, an investigation about the IARC monograph revealed that Aaron Blair, the epidemiologist who chaired a 2015 meeting on glyphosate, withheld critical research from

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<sup>5</sup> Section of Evidence Synthesis and Classification - IARC Monographs Group, <https://www.iarc.fr/en/research-groups/IMO/objectives.php> (last visited Oct. 26, 2017).

<sup>6</sup> *In glyphosate review*, *supra* note 4.

<sup>7</sup> *Id.*

<sup>8</sup> *Id.*

<sup>9</sup> *Id.*

<sup>10</sup> *Id.*

<sup>11</sup> *Id.*

<sup>12</sup> *Id.*

<sup>13</sup> *Id.*

IARC.<sup>14</sup> Blair admitted to knowing that this research could have prevented glyphosate's Group 2A classification.<sup>15</sup>

Besides blatant manipulations of the monograph itself, the Committee is also concerned with Christopher Portier's apparent conflict of interest in relation to the monograph. In his deposition this past September, it became evident that at the same time Portier chaired the IARC Working Group that proposed an assessment on glyphosate, he was also a private litigation consultant for two law firms.<sup>16</sup> In his role as a consultant, he directly benefited from IARC's classification of glyphosate as a "probable" carcinogen.<sup>17</sup> He helped prepare the case against Monsanto, the agricultural company that utilized glyphosate in its products. As a litigation consultant, Portier made at least \$160,000 for his initial preparatory work alone.<sup>18</sup>

The Committee is concerned about the scientific integrity of the IMO assessment of glyphosate and of IARC in general. With United States' taxpayer dollars funding a portion of IMO, it is this Committee's duty to ensure sound science and transparency within the agency. As such, the Committee may soon hold a hearing to receive testimony from IARC on how it conducts its IMO reviews and to learn more about who is responsible for the editing of Monograph 112 on glyphosate. Please provide the Committee the names and contact information of IARC-affiliated individuals who would serve as potential witnesses for this hearing. We ask that you provide this information no later than November 8, 2017.

The Committee on Science, Space, and Technology has jurisdiction over environmental and scientific programs and "shall review and study on a continuing basis laws, programs, and Government activities" as set forth in House Rule X.

If you have any questions about this request, please contact Committee staff at 202-225-6371. Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Rep. Lamar Smith  
Chairman  
Committee on Science,  
Space, and Technology



Rep. Andy Biggs  
Chairman  
Subcommittee on  
Environment

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<sup>14</sup> Kate Kelland, *Cancer agency left in the dark over glyphosate evidence*, REUTERS, June 14, 2017, available at <https://www.reuters.com/investigates/special-report/glyphosate-cancer-data/>.

<sup>15</sup> *Id.*

<sup>16</sup> Portier Dep. 84:1-84:8, Oct. 6, 2017.

<sup>17</sup> *Id.* at 96:14-96:22.

<sup>18</sup> *Id.*

Christopher P. Wild

October 30, 2017

Page 4

cc: The Honorable Eddie Bernice Johnson, Ranking Member, Committee on Science, Space,  
and Technology

The Honorable Suzanne Bonamici, Ranking Member, Subcommittee on Environment