

Accepted Manuscript



Ambient Air Toxicity – A Rising Specter of Death

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PII: S0002-9149(16)30920-1

DOI: [10.1016/j.amjcard.2016.05.035](https://doi.org/10.1016/j.amjcard.2016.05.035)

Reference: AJC 21887

To appear in: *The American Journal of Cardiology*

Received Date: 10 May 2016

Accepted Date: 18 May 2016

Please cite this article as: RuDusky BM, Ambient Air Toxicity – A Rising Specter of Death, *The American Journal of Cardiology* (2016), doi: 10.1016/j.amjcard.2016.05.035.

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The important and ambitious study by Vaduganathan et al, provides another substantial stimulus for continued efforts to control the quality of environmental air. The data obtained by epidemiologic, societal and research organizations have provided ample evidence to provoke further legislation by government agencies at all levels and the cooperation of the industrial and corporate sectors regardless of their size and economic importance.

The study by Vaduganathan ¹ and that of Lee et al ², address the importance of particle size (2.5 to 10 microns) micrometers) as well as quantity or concentration (micrograms per cubic meter, $\mu\text{g}/\text{m}^3$). A particle less than 10 microns in diameter is less than one-seventh the width of a human hair. A micron is a unit of length equal to one-millionth (10^{-6}) of a meter. Coarse particles are those classified as being greater than 2.5 microns in diameter and fine particles 2.5 microns or less. Presently available microfilters are said to have the ability to remove particulate matter from 5 to 2 microns in diameter. High quality home filters are advertised as having the ability to remove 99% of all pollen, dust, smoke and particles as small as 0.3 micron.

Present and previous research studies measuring particle-sized contaminants in general, have not relegated the medical consequences produced by the contaminants to specific chemicals and substances. The California Environmental Protection Agency and the National Resource Defense Council have been world leaders in the study and evaluation of urban air pollution.

Unbridled diesel fumes are one of the most toxic substances in existence, containing over 40 organic and inorganic toxins, all of which are harmful singularly

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