

Rendered unconscious by Organophosphate poisoning?

Need help?

Were you in Salisbury on 4th March 2018?

	Yes	No
Probable cause	Russian Secret Service	Sheep dip, insecticides or bleed air from an aircraft engine
Accountability	Denial by the perpetrators Try to shift the blame onto others	Denial by the regulators Try to shift the blame onto victims
Antidote	Atropine and Pralidoxime	Atropine and Pralidoxime
Long term effects	Severe (1)	"minor and subtle" (2)
Aftercare	Exceptional	<p>You can expect your GP to do a series of blood tests and tell you there is nothing abnormal and therefore nothing wrong.</p> <p>The next step might be referral to a neurologist who again will trot out the party line – chronic chemical poisoning does not exist.</p> <p>The next port of call is usually the psychiatrists who do not have a "toxicological" diagnostic pigeon hole and will squeeze you into the next nearest fit, ie chronic depression.</p> <p>The treatment of this, namely anti-depressants, will make the poor sufferer worse, s/he will refuse to take them and be discharged as an uncooperative patient.</p> <p>The chemically poisoned person is left to sort out his life as best as s/he can and usually ends up with declining health.</p>

How long do organophosphates persist in the environment?

In Salisbury	Elsewhere (*)
"The chemical does not degrade quickly" said DEFRA Chief Scientist Ian Boyd six weeks after the Skripals were poisoned "you can assume that it is not much different now from the day it was distributed." (3) [and this was after six of the wettest weeks on record]	"Organophosphates are unstable and nonpersistent" (4) "they rapidly break down in the environment with a half life of 10 days." (5)

(*) Please disregard this column, it is just a repetition of some of the wrong information given through the years. Ian Boyd is right when he says OPs "degrade in the environment but under some situations degrade much more slowly"; this is especially true when they have been mixed with stabilisers to prolong shelf-life. As Ian says "the deeper you look into this, the more complicated it is"; one recent study suggests: "microbial biomass often needs a lengthy adaptation period in which soil bacteria mutate to be able to metabolize OPs" (6)

Ian is also right to highlight the difficulty ensuring an area is sufficiently clear of OPs so as not to pose a danger to human health, quite often the first time people become aware of the presence of OPs is at the point when their health is affected (and the thoroughness of the investigation is proportional to the value the authorities place on the lives of those affected and eagerness to establish the truth).

For many it has been a struggle firstly to get a diagnosis of OP poisoning and then secondly work out why they in particular had been afflicted even though they had been following the safety guidelines. We are indebted to the patience and perseverance of those with who demonstrated OPs can persist for far longer than expected (for example by storing a diluted sample for five years to show it did not degrade, other examples on page 16 at (7))

In 1993 the UK government realised the safety guidelines used during their compulsory sheep dipping campaign were just plain wrong. Rather belatedly [stickers](#) were issued to put on can, health warning [posters](#) printed, some products taken off the market and compulsion to dip halted. This was all very welcome but sadly there still has never been an official acknowledgement of the irreversible harm it caused to thousands or an apology offered.

If we can be of any help please do get in touch, details on the [Contacts page](#).