

Growing Nail Salon Collaborations in the Western Region Address Environmental Justice and Health Disparity Issues Faced by Nail Salon Communities

Julia Liou¹ and Patricia Huback²

¹Asian Health Services, Oakland

²Department of Environmental Quality, Portland, Oregon



BACKGROUND

In the United States, the exponential growth of the beauty industry is reflected by the increasing number of nail technicians in the U.S., which has jumped 374% over the past decade. Nail salon workers are exposed daily to a variety of toxic chemicals with the potential for a variety of negative health impacts. Given their occupational exposures, history of immigration, low awareness of health risks, and limited access to health care, the nail salon workers have complex health profiles that place them at risk for occupational-related health impacts.

ISSUE

Nail salon workers are exposed daily to a variety of toxic chemicals, including formaldehyde, toluene, and dibutyl phthalate among others, with the potential for a variety of negative health impacts. Since the Federal Drug Administration does not require testing, review, or approval of cosmetics and the Environmental Protection Agency cannot regulate chemicals of nail products or request data from manufacturers, this industry has been virtually unregulated. Many of the Permissible Exposure Limits that the Occupational Safety and Health Agency (OSHA) and respective state OSHA's enforce were originally established in the 1970's and were based mostly on a male workforce, account for acute exposures only for an 8 hour exposure time, and did not account for multiple exposures when different target organs are involved. Since 96% of the industry's workforce are female, many who are women of color, of reproductive age, and lack access to health care coverage, exposures to these toxic chemicals are a concern. In response, two Western collaboratives, the California Healthy Nail Salon Collaborative and the Oregon Collaborative for Healthy Nail Salons, were formed to address these concerns and work to improve the environmental health and safety of nail salon workers and customers.

OREGON COLLABORATIVE FOR HEALTHY NAIL SALONS

MISSION

To improve the environmental health of nail salon workers and customers through education and outreach.

HISTORY

OCHNS was originally initiated through a grant effort, although the grant was not realized, enthusiasm and interest in this topic was. EPA Region 10 sponsored a conference and training regarding nail salon issues in August 2007. Attendees formed OCHNS and started meeting monthly thereafter. The group is a diverse mix of stakeholders ranging from regulatory agencies, including Oregon OSHA, the Department of Environmental Quality, and the Oregon Health Licensing Agency (OHLA) among others, to non profit organizations and health professionals. Interests among group members range from chronic exposure research, advocacy work, ventilation, reproductive impacts on pregnant nail technicians, and overall best management practice (BMP) education.

CALIFORNIA HEALTHY NAIL SALON COLLABORATIVE

MISSION

To advance a preventive environmental health agenda to ensure the health and safety of nail and beauty salon communities.

HISTORY

CHNSC was formed in 2005 out of growing concern for the health and safety of nail salon and other cosmetology workers, owners, and consumers. The Collaborative coordinates, leverages, and builds upon the respective expertise and activities of its diverse members and partners to advance a preventative environmental health agenda for the nail salon sector in California. Composed of over 23 public health and environmental advocates, nail salon workers and owners, community-based groups, educational institutions, and allies in government agencies, the Collaborative seeks to proactively address health and safety concerns facing the nail salon worker community through an integrated approach using policy advocacy, research, outreach, and education strategies.

% Estimate of Licensed Nail Salon Vietnamese Workers in CA & OR

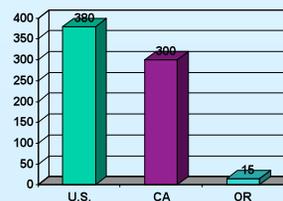
	Percent range
California	59-80% *
Oregon	35-60% **

*NAILS Magazine 2007 & Federman MN, Harrington DE, Krynski KJ. Vietnamese manicurists: are immigrants displacing natives or finding new nails to polish? Industrial & Labor Relations Review 2006; 59:302-318
**Oregon Health Licensing Agency estimates

KEY ACTIVITIES

Outreach	Current Projects	Future
Distribution of BMP brochure and pamphlet (brochure available in English and Vietnamese)	Working with a Community Health Worker in Multnomah County who is conducting a Needs Assessment	Pursuing a research grant for monitoring indoor air
OHLA sponsored BMP seminars in lieu of fines for sanitation and infection control violations	Creation of OCHNS website to provide resources, articles, and projects	Creation of a BMP DVD
Field testing OCHNS created BMP checklist for nail salon owners to take as a self-test	Maintaining a good working relationship with other Collaboratives, especially Washington and California	Seeking to support national and state level policy for chemical policy reform

Approx # (in thousands) of Nail Salon Workers*



*Oregon Health Licensing Agency estimates & National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH). Registry of Toxic Effects of Chemical Substances RTECS) [Web Page]. 2006; Available at <http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/rtecs/>

KEY ACTIVITIES

Policy	Outreach	Research	Future
Nail Salon Legislative Hearing	Held 3 nail salon community forums with 80-200 attendees	Planning research convening to establish research agenda	Creating policy recommendation report
Working with CalOSHA on nail salon workplace guidance document	Working with Board of Barbering & Cosmetology on translating key health and safety documents	Provided input to EPA Nail Salon Guide	Expanding worker/owner advisory group to guide the Collaborative's work
Working with CA Air Resources Board on nail product chemical regulations	Publishing series of articles regarding nail salon health & safety in ethnic media	Created database of research studies on nail product chemicals	Advocating for lower CalOSHA permissible exposure limits