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Theodorakis studies effects of toxic chemicals

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There are tens of thousands of known chemicals and many, according to Theodoreakis, have not been tested for toxicity, so we don’t really know how serious the threat is.

In some cases we can predict it,” he said. In some cases we could have predicted it but we didn’t, like when PCB’s (polychlorinated biphenyls) were banned thought to come through the atmosphere by ‘leaking’ out of transformers, he said, where there have been strict environmental controls like


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were especially in the United States, were heavily polluted they didn’t fish, so there were no fish to catch,” Theodoreakis explained. “But as the rivers became cleaned, the fish started coming back and started incorporating the chemicals. Some of the chemicals can be concentrated many thousands of times in the fish compared to the water.”

One of the big topics of ecotoxicology now is the indirect effect of chemicals. For example, when chemicals are used to kill algae in lakes, they end up killing the fish as well because those chemicals end up in fish that consume the algae. Theodoreakis said: “This unintended consequence is what ecotoxicology is about. The ideas that when you affect part of it you end up affecting everything else.”

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