

**Best Education Practices (BEPs) for Water Outreach Professionals**  
**Defining BEPs, Refining New Resources and Recommending Future Actions**

*POSTER PRESENTATION*

**Presenter(s):** Lori Severtson, Gaylord Nelson Institute of Environmental Studies and School of Nursing, University of Wisconsin

**Title:** How does risk information shape protective behavior and support for policy to mitigate risk in the environment?

Abstract: This modeling analysis focused on study participants with arsenic levels  $\geq 10$  ug/L; 545 (84%) of 649 mailed surveys were suitable for analysis. The CSM proposes that experience is an important form of information that shapes understandings and responses to risk. We measured *experiential information* as 1) perceived overall water quality and 2) perceived arsenic-related health effects. *External sources* of arsenic risk information were 1) the self-reported arsenic level and 2) total information use. Structural equation modeling quantified relationships based on the CSM and explained 52% and 55% of the variance in behavior and policy opinions respectively. Measured public policy opinions included reducing private well construction and refusing high water use industries. External information sources had their greatest effect on behavior through certainty about arsenic control methods and on policy opinion through understanding causes of arsenic. Experiential information (predominantly perceived water quality) had its greatest effect on behavior through the emotions, health and property value consequences and beliefs about identifying arsenic exposure. Experience and external sources of information influenced behavior while external information was the dominant influence on policy opinions. Information should 1) promote understanding lab results and provide guidance for 2) interpreting and responding to perceived overall water quality and 3) selecting effective arsenic control methods in order to promote protective behavior. Public information should educate the public about arsenic causes to promote groundwater policy support. People need to understand how to identify, causes and consequences of, and how to control both risk exposure and risk in the environment to foster comprehensive environmental health prevention.

Target Audience(s): Agency partners, NGOs

Educational Purpose: Information, communications and education

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