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Member of the European Parliament  
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Dear Dr. Lucas,

Thank you for your letter of 2 February 2006 concerning certain hair colorants that Commissioner Kyprianou passed to me as Commissioner responsible for the Cosmetics Directive.

We are aware that many chemicals like hair dye constituents are potential skin sensitizers and can cause allergic reactions. Unfortunately, it is impossible to phase out, or ban, all such ingredients from consumer products like hair dyes. Para-phenylenediamine (p-PD) has been used for a very long time as it is an important and necessary constituent in permanent hair dyes preparations. Its use has been regulated since the start of the Cosmetic Directive in 1976. As p-PD is a strong potential skin sensitizer, and due to its sensitising properties, the warning "Can cause allergic reaction" has been obligatory on the label. The same requirement also covers the other constituent, toluene-2,5diamine (2,5-TDA, that you mentioned in your letter.

Further amendments to the Cosmetic Directive established safety instructions for use of hair colorants by consumers and for professional use by introducing the obligatory recommendation "Wear suitable gloves". To minimize the potential risk of skin sensitizers to consumers, information about the presence of these ingredients in consumer products is given to them by mentioning their presence on the label.

In 2001, an association between permanent hair dye use and increased risk of bladder cancer was claimed in the study "Use of permanent hair dyes and bladder cancer risk" by M. Gago-Dominguez. Due to this safety concern, the Commission started a re-evaluation of hair dye substances, including p-PD. The mentioning by the Scientific Committee of insufficient data was in relation to the risk assessment of the use of p-PD and the risk of cancer and not in relation to the sensitising properties of p-PD which are well-known.

A new opinion on the safety evaluation of p-PD is expected to be delivered in the autumn 2006, as already confirmed by Commissioner Kyprianou in his letter of 3 April 2006. Accordingly, this will allow the Commission to take appropriate measures, if needed, to ensure a high level of protection of consumers' health.

Yours sincerely,

