

Mock Oral Exam Question

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An original mock oral exam question for studying for the PHPM Royal College Exam, submitted by Dr. Markus Faulhaber (PGY4, McMaster University).

Stem:

You are a Public Health & Preventative Medicine specialist and work as an independent consultant for your provincial government on environmental health issues. Recently, a Medical Officer (of Health), or MOH, in a Canadian province where forestry is a major industry has been dismissed from her job. She had been looking into the potential health effects of the herbicide glyphosate, which is extensively used in this industry, shortly before dismissal. The WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer deemed glyphosate a "probable carcinogen" in early 2015. This is not the first time that a MOH was dismissed by a provincial government for unclear reasons. There is increasing debate about the independence of MOHs from government and if dismissals are at times "politically motivated". The following is a media request by a radio station on the role and expertise of the MOH to comment on health effects.

Question (this is intended a role-play question for a radio interview):

Thanks for making the time to speak with us, doctor [name]; we have a few brief questions about the recent firing of your colleague.

1. What is the role of a Medical Officer (of Health) (MOH) in commenting on environmental exposures?
2. What is your expertise?
3. What is your training to allow you to comment on health effects of herbicides, shale gas etc.?
4. What are your statutory obligations for the above exposures (i.e. specifically pesticide glyphosphate)?
5. Do you think it is right that the MOH was fired?
6. What is the process for firing a MOH in your province/territory?
7. How can we protect the advocacy role of a MOH?

Responses:

Post your thoughts on the responses to the Facebook Group for discussion.