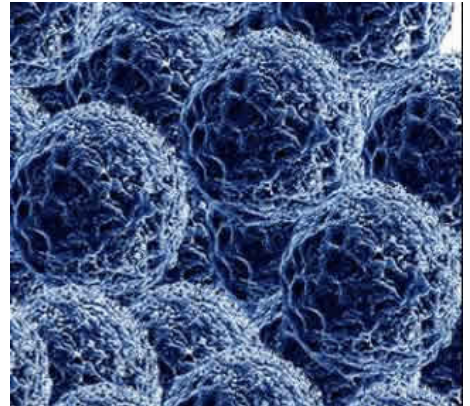


Do We Need the Precautionary Principle To Protect Us From Potential Risks From Nanotechnology? The NRDC Thinks So

January 29, 2012 by [Seth Jaffe](#)

In a [prior rant](#), I raised the concern that EPA would oppose the use of new cleanup technologies based on nanotechnologies on the basis of the precautionary principle. I may not have been exactly on the mark, but I was pretty close. On Thursday, the [NRDC announced](#) that it has filed suit challenging EPA's decision to issue a [conditional registration of a nanosilver-based antimicrobial agent](#). The NRDC asserts that EPA's use of the conditional registration process is "illegal," apparently because EPA does not have sufficient information to justify a conclusion that use of the nanosilver products do not cause "unreasonable adverse effects to human health and the environment." According to the NRDC, EPA's decision is

"just the most recent example in a long line of decisions that treats [sic] humans and our environmental as guinea pigs for these untested pesticides."



As noted in my prior post, there is a difference between regulating **in spite** of uncertainty – which can frequently be justified – and regulating **because of** uncertainty, which is deeply troubling. Nanomaterials hold great promise in a wide number of fields, including many uses – such as antimicrobials – focused on **protecting** public health and the environment.

What is the basis for keeping these materials off the market just because we haven't proved that they don't pose a risk?

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