

## **"This town can't be that harmful": risk perception of lead exposure**

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**Introduction:** Much of the focus of lead risk health campaigns has been on vulnerable populations such as children and pregnant women, thus not communicating the risk of exposure for other adults. This becomes a particular issue for adults who are long-term residents of communities near lead mines as they can be at an increased risk of exposure to lead within their environment. As such, this study investigated the perceived risk of exposure to lead in residents of a lead mining community.

**Methods:** Semi-structured interviews were held with 20 (3 male, 17 female) residents from a community in close proximity to a lead mine and were recruited through the community media and local organizations. Common themes were identified through an interpretative phenomenological analytical framework providing an in depth examination of the lived experiences of participants.

**Results:** Majority of the participants did not perceive a health risk from exposure to lead. Those who reported a specific concern surrounding their exposure to lead had lived within the community for less than five years. However, it was commonly noted that the behaviors to control residents' exposure to lead were easily performed and low cost.

**Conclusions:** These results suggest that residents of a community chronically exposed to lead seem to become complacent about their risk for poor health outcomes the longer they live within the community. These findings have implications for the communication of the risk of exposure to lead for adults who are chronically exposed to lead.