

A room full of toxic computers

By “E.I.” Jerry Evans



In 1997 an engineer got sickened by the fumes from the room full of new computers shown in the picture.

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In 1997 I had a milder version of multiple chemical sensitivity (MCS). I didn't really know what it was yet; I just knew that certain rooms and people wearing strong fragrances made me dizzy, and that fresh air helped. I was still more than a year away from getting diagnosed by a physician.

That summer I attended a conference in Chicago. The first day I signed up for a full-day tutorial, which took place in a meeting room where they had set up dozens of new desktop computers (see picture).

2 Toxic computers

In those days computers used a lot more electricity, and gave off a lot more heat. The bulky CRT screens each used about a hundred watts. All that heat made them offgas a toxic soup of plastics, flame retardants, and much else.

I couldn't really smell it and I didn't know anything about the offgassing yet. At work I had a desktop computer, but it was around four years old, while my own computer at home was a couple of years old. They were not a problem, but now I sat in a room full of brand-new computers.

The morning started out fine. The instructor did his thing and we in the audience could play along on each our computer. Mid-morning I started to feel as if I hadn't slept much last night. It got worse and I was afraid I was going to fall asleep.

I toughed it out until lunch. Coming back from lunch I felt fully recovered. All the cobwebs in my brain were gone.

That didn't last long. Within less than an hour, I again felt as if I was falling asleep. I hadn't heard the name "brain fog" yet, but that was clearly what it was.

Realizing what was happening I left the room and recovered out in the hallway. Puzzled about all this, I took the above picture of the room and then left.

I spent the rest of the week attending presentations and exhibits in other rooms. None of them were packed with equipment like this one, and I only got mildly brain fogged now and then.

As my MCS got worse over time, these sorts of episodes became much more frequent. And I learned the hard way that computers were very toxic when they were somewhat new. Three years later I had to give up my career. Today's computers are designed to be a lot less toxic than they were in the 1990s. They also run a lot cooler. Of course, nobody admits that these older computers were a health hazard.

About the author

Jerry Evans has a Master's degree in engineering and worked professionally for fifteen years before he had to give up. He is the author of the two books *Chemical and Electrical Hypersensitivity*, and *The Healthy House Quest*. He receives no royalties for his books. He is sometimes referred to as "EI Jerry," as there are other authors with the same name; they are not related.

More information

More about the history of MCS on www.eiwellspring.org/mcshistory.html.

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