How Fracking Non-Disclosure Agreements Suppress Important Health Information

A TYPICAL SCENARIO

1. COMPLAINT
A family complains that fracking has polluted the air they breathe and the water they drink or use on their farm. Common complaints are brown, smelly water, toxic fumes in the air, headaches, sore throat and burning eyes.

2. DENIAL
The fracking company denies any harm, or states that the pollution existed before they started fracking.

3. EXPENSE
The family – at considerable expense – obtains enough evidence to document harm, including independent lab analyses and medical records.

4. STRESS
The fracking company aggressively fights efforts to compensate the family for as long as possible. This causes the family to incur considerable financial expenses and additional stress.

5. SETTLEMENT
After an extended period of time, the fracking company settles the case, typically offering to buy the property and provide a financial settlement.

6. VICTIMS SILENCED
In order to receive this compensation, the family must promise never to discuss their case and never to discuss anything related to fracking or oil and gas production, including data gathered by experts (water quality, health effects).

The fracking industry refuses to say how many of these agreements have been signed. But reasonable estimates put the number in the thousands.

The strategy keeps data from health researchers and the public, and makes it difficult to challenge the industry’s claims that fracking is safe.