



Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter -- October 2009



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Dear CHE Partners:

As the health care reform debate continues, little discussion has focused on the significant cost savings that could be achieved through preventing exposures to toxic chemicals--chemicals that are shown to contribute to numerous health endpoints, including obesity, diabetes, learning and developmental disabilities, Parkinson's, reproductive health problems, breast cancer, asthma and heart disease. When tobacco use was significantly curtailed, for example, the number of cases of lung cancer and others associated diseases fell dramatically, saving billions of dollars. The downside is that it took decades to persuade industry and government that the scientific data linking smoking and lung cancer was strong enough to warrant such strict regulation--and in the meanwhile, many, many more people became ill.

In this context, we have to ask how much evidence is enough before we switch to safer alternatives and implement regulations that allow only chemicals that have been thoroughly tested for human safety on the market? Do we have to wait years or even decades more, while people become increasingly sick, to reduce toxic exposures? What kind of health care savings might we have if we took preventative action now?

At a meeting of 150 scientists and physicians a couple weeks ago, Dr. Phil Landrigan from Mount Sinai School of Medicine, stated that chronic childhood diseases linked to exposure to toxic chemicals in the environment have been surging upward, costing the US almost \$55 billion a year. Other researchers in children's environmental health say this number is, in fact, much higher. When you then add in the environmentally attributable fraction of health care costs related to a host of other chronic diseases and disabilities in adults, even conservative estimates suggest that our society could save almost \$200 billion a year.

Currently, the proposed health care reform bill in Congress suggests that the expansion of coverage would cost \$829 billion over 10 years. Let's say we could reduce environmental contributors to chronic disease and save \$200 billion a year for 10 years. That would mean a total savings \$2 trillion, thus making the current acrimonious debate regarding expanded coverage seem hardly worth it. In other words, if we invested in primary prevention--even in this relatively narrow arena of minimizing hazardous environmental exposures without addressing other pressing concerns such as socioeconomic status, access to health care, nutrition, etc., then full health care coverage would fiscally achievable without dire predictions of bankrupting future generations.

Fortunately, EPA Administrator Lisa Jackson just announced some ground-breaking principles for establishing a system for testing chemicals that would be more protective

or human health than current regulations are. She called on Congress to overhaul the woefully inadequate Toxic Substances Control Act, passed in 1976, that was supposed to regulate chemical manufacturing and use. In the past 30-plus years, only five chemicals out of the 80,000 now on the market were determined to put people at "unreasonable risk" under TSCA. Even asbestos, a substance well-studied and known to significantly impact human health, ultimately could not be banned given TSCA's limited scope. By contrast, Jackson prescribed a new regulatory structure that would, among other features, promote green chemistry and safer alternatives and ensure manufacturers provide EPA with the necessary information to conclude that new and existing chemicals do not endanger public health or the environment ([see full EPA press release](#)).

Now the question is whether Congressional leaders, embroiled in the politics of health care reform, can connect the dots and see that regulating chemicals to protect human health also means substantially reducing health care costs while increasing the capacity of the US to provide health care coverage to all its citizens. Surely that would be a 'win-win.'

Elise Miller, MEd
Director

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Collaborative on Health and the Environment

CHE Partnership Calls

CHE is pleased to announce the following two upcoming Partnership calls:

Late Lessons from Early Warnings: the Precautionary Principle 1896-2000 a conversation with David Gee

Thursday, October 15, 2009 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

Join CHE for an international conversation with David Gee, Senior Advisor at the European Environment Agency (EEA). Michael Lerner, President of Commonwealth, will discuss with Gee a wide variety of topics of importance to environmental and human health, including chemical science and policy, recent work in the field of EMF science and the far-reaching framework of ecological health and the implications such a framework has for policy changes.

[RSVP for this call](#)

This call will be recorded for archival purposes.

Navigating the Scientific Evidence to Ensure Prevention

Wednesday, November 11, 2009 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

In August, CHE leaders, scientists, clinicians and community partners participated in the workshop Navigating the Science to Improve Prevention. Now, join CHE on **Wednesday, November 11th at 10:00 AM Pacific / 1:00 PM Eastern** for an important discussion about the efforts being undertaken to translate the emerging science in environmental reproductive health into timely action in clinical and policy arenas.

Complex scientific evidence is constantly emerging about how the environment affects our health. This evidence is often murky or inconclusive. How can clinicians, policymakers, and others make decisions that protect health when the evidence isn't cut-and-dried? In response to these difficult questions an interdisciplinary group of 23 scientists, clinicians and community/patient-based partners convened to develop

the Navigation Guide -- a methodology that forges the strengths of evidence-based medicine and environmental health and can be used to vet the scientific evidence related to reproductive environmental health in a timely and transparent manner.

This call will give the background for the workshop and provide several participants time to reflect on real world applications for the methodology.

[RSVP for this call](#)

Featured speakers will include:

- **Tracey Woodruff**, PhD, MPH: Associate Professor and Director, Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment
- **Jeanne Conry**, MD, PhD: Assistant Physician in Chief, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Kaiser Permanente North Valley and Chair for the District IX office of the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists for California
- **Pablo Rodriguez**, MD: Associate Chief, Obstetrics and Gynecology and Clinical Associate Professor, Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology Brown Medical School and Women & Infants Hospital of Rhode Island

The call will be moderated by Heather Sarantis, Women's Health Program Manager at Commonweal and part of the organizing committee for this workshop. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

Resources from recent CHE calls:

If you missed any of the following CHE calls, you may listen to MP3 recordings and find supporting materials at the following links:

- September 30, 2009 - [CHE Cafe call with author Douglas Abrams](#)
- September 22, 2009 - [Food Matters: The Impact of Food Systems on Public Health](#)
- July 28, 2009 - [Precaution's Reach: A Principle in Action](#)
- June 23, 2009 - [A Common Agenda for Health and the Environment: Goals for the Next Generation and Steps to Get There](#)
- June 12, 2009 - [Ecological Intelligence: A Conversation with Daniel Goleman](#)

And of course, you can always explore our [archived resources](#) from past Partnership calls.

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

Working Group Highlights:

CHE is proud to highlight each month new and exciting working group efforts, which continue to draw the link between health and the environment.

This month:

~ **CHE LDDI** has published a new **Practice Prevention column** detailing the links between learning and developmental disabilities and exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs). Based on the seminal scientific statement from the Endocrine Society published in June 2009 indicating strong associations between EDC exposures and a wide range of chronic diseases and disabilities, the column makes the scientific information about EDCs accessible for non-scientists. Written for parents, educators, child-care providers and others who are responsible for children's well-being, this column describes how children are exposed to EDCs and how to reduce exposures.
[View the column](#)

~ On October 1 and 2, **CHE WA** hosted the first ever **Northwest Children's Environmental Health Forum** welcoming over 300 participants to two days of science and policy information on children's environmental health.
Read more

CHE EMF

~ coordinated by **Nancy Evans, nancywrite@comcast.net and Cindy Sage, sage@silcom.com**

~ **The Childrens' Environmental Health Forum**, held October 1-2 in the Seattle area and organized by CHE-WA, included a briefing by Cindy Sage, MA on Science and Public Health Implications of Electromagnetic Fields. This is the first time the BioInitiative Report summarizing the international science on EMF and wireless technologies has been presented to a forum of this type in the United States. It has been presented to European health and science groups at least six times since 2007 when the Report was first issued, and our CHE-HEAL Partners have been helpful in disseminating it.

Cindy Sage, who is a long-time CHE partner and co-chair of CHE-EMF, briefly summarized the health effects of electromagnetic fields, responded to questions and offered hand-outs to an extremely engaged audience. Please see the [CHE-EMF Working Group webpage](#) for more information and fact sheets.

CHE Fertility

~ coordinated by **Julia Varshavsky, CHE Program Associate, julia@healthandenvironment.org**

~ **What Does the Environment Have To Do With Medicine? Reporting Back From a Premiere Reproductive Society Conference**

Wednesday, October 28, 11:00 AM Pacific / 2:00 PM Eastern time

Join CHE-Fertility for a discussion that highlights the role of the Environment and Special Interest Group ([ERSIG](#)) at the American Society for Reproductive Medicine ([ASRM](#)), a premiere reproductive society. ERSIG was established in 2007, and has since then promoted an environmental focus within ASRM. The mission of ERSIG is to enhance understanding of environmental factors on reproductive health through excellence in education, research, and clinical practice.

We will hear reports from the following confirmed speakers on environmental health highlights from this year's ASRM conference, taking place in Atlanta, Georgia, October 17-21, 2009:

- **Susan Benoff**, PhD, Associate Professor of Obstetrics & Gynecology and of Cell Biology and Director, Fertility Research Laboratories, New York University School of Medicine; and Chair-Elect of ERSIG
- **Michael Diamond**, MD, Kamran S. Moghissi Professor and Associate Chair of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Director, Division of Reproductive Endocrinology and Infertility, Assistant Dean for Clinical and Translational Research, Wayne State University School of Medicine, and Director, Detroit Regional Institute for Clinical and Translational Research; and Secretary of ERSIG

Please email Julia Varshavsky at julia@healthandenvironment.org if you plan to join this call so we are certain to reserve the right number of phone lines.

To dial in to the call, please use the following information:

Dial-in number: 1-270-400-2000
Access code: 198686#

CHE LDDI

~ coordinated by **Laura Abulafia, laura@healthandenvironment.org and Elise Miller, CHE Director, elise@healthandenvironment.org**

~ **The LDDI biomonitoring project** is progressing quickly, with a report title being finalized this week and participants hearing their results this week and next week. This is the first biomonitoring, or "body burden" project that looks at a health

This is the first biomonitoring, or "body burden" project that looks at a health-affected community. Media outreach strategy is also moving forward to disseminate this important project to the public. For more information on this ground breaking project please contact Laura Abulafia.

~ **The Mental Health Working Group:** The Mental Health & Environment Working Group, chaired by [NADD](#), has been focusing on the association between pesticide exposures and mental illness. It has drafted and is revising a brief paper to help inform healthcare professionals that there is an association between pesticide exposures and mental illness symptoms. Once revisions are completed, a three-fold brochure based upon the paper will be finalized, printed, and distributed. The Working Group is assisting LDDI with revision of their Practice Prevention column on pesticides that was published in 2006. A paper reviewing the research literature on the association between pesticide exposure and mental health symptoms is being developed and will be submitted to an open-access, peer-reviewed journal. All of these written materials will be useful tools in reaching out to the mental health and health care communities about the role that environmental exposures may play in the development of psychiatric symptoms and mental illness. Lead is the next area of exposure on which the Working Group will focus.

The next Working Group call is scheduled for **Friday, December 11th at 1:00 pm Eastern**. For additional information, contact Ed Seliger, Environmental Health Project Coordinator, NADD, at eseliger@thenadd.org.

~ The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ([AAIDD](#)), the Learning Disabilities Association of America ([LDA](#)) and many other LDDI partners worked hard on putting together a policy forum in Illinois on October 2nd, entitled "**Public Health, Toxic Chemicals and Disabilities.**" The event was a great success with four policymakers attending and one speaking at the meeting. Part of the meeting was a panel on biomonitoring where personal stories from the LDDI biomonitoring project were shared. For more information on this state-level meeting, you can contact Laura Abulafia with AAIDD: laura@aaidd.org or Maureen Swanson with LDA: mswanson@ldaamerica.org.

~ Federal work on revising the **Toxic Substances Control Act** is continuous and has been a priority for LDDI. For more information on the national activities surrounding this extensive work, please contact Joyce Martin at AAIDD: jmartin@aaidd.org or Maureen Swanson with LDA.

~ AAIDD, with cosponsorship from LDA, has produced a **pamphlet for expecting moms** discussing neurotoxic exposures in the house, workplace, and outdoors, and this educational pamphlet can be found at www.aaidd.org/ehi or by contacting Laura Abulafia at laura@aaidd.org.

~ The **NADD's 26th Annual Conference and Exhibit Show** will be on **Wednesday, October 21 through Friday, October 23, 2009**, in New Orleans, Louisiana. Speakers for the environmental health project at the NADD include Elise Miller, Director of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment ([CHE](#)), and more. For more information visit www.thenadd.org.

CHE Discussion Group Updates

~ **The Metabolic Syndrome discussion group** will hold its next call on **Tuesday, November 3, 2009 at 11:00 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern**. For dial-in information please contact info@healthandenvironment.org. If you are not already a CHE Partner and would like to participate in this discussion group on a regular basis, please first sign on as a [CHE Partner](#).

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE HEAL

~ coordinated by Diana Smith, diana@env-health.org

~ **Bringing health into the heart of climate change negotiations**

The Health and Environment Alliance ([HEAL](#)) and Health Care Without Harm ([HCWH](#)) Europe, in collaboration with the Climate and Health Council, have launched a campaign to put health at the heart of climate change negotiations.

The European launch on 6 October included the presentation of a giant "Prescription for a Healthy Planet" to European Union Health Commissioner Androulla Vassiliou. This was followed by a lively debate with the Commissioner and MEPs on how the health and medical perspective can be integrated into discussions in climate change meetings in Copenhagen in December 2009 and beyond. A Global Network on Health and Climate Change will be launched at the pre-Copenhagen meeting of the United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change in Barcelona in November 2009, which will join the European efforts to those of other regions.

More information at <http://www.env-health.org/a/3404>

~ **UK survey on pesticide use in schools**

The Health and Environment Alliance ([HEAL](#)) is working to reduce environmental health risks across Europe. As part of the Sick of Pesticides UK initiative, two questionnaires have been launched: one directed at the schools themselves, and another for citizens to survey their own schools. The results will be used to raise awareness of the links between pesticides and children's health.

More information at <http://www.env-health.org/a/3401>

CHE Washington

~ coordinated by Steve Gilbert, sgilbert@innd.org or contact info@healthandenvironment.org

~ On October 1 and 2, the Washington Chapter of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment hosted the first ever **Northwest Children's Environmental Health Forum**. Over 300 participants attended, and more than 30 speakers shared information on the latest science and policy related to environmental factors impacting children's health. Dignitaries included Ron Sims, the new Undersecretary for Housing and Urban Development, and Michelle Pirzadeh, EPA Region 10's Acting Regional Director. They were joined by researchers from universities across the United States, and policy makers forwarding new protection legislation and programs.

CHE-WA's children's environmental health working group is incredibly grateful to the sponsors and the many volunteers who helped to organize an outstandingly well-run event -- and who stocked it with organic food and composting for waste! The working group will be meeting later this month to further debrief on the event and begin to discuss future follow-up events, including "mini-fairs" on children's environmental health that target the general public with this information. For more information or to become more involved in CHE-WA's efforts, you may visit <http://www.chenw.org/CEHforum.html> or email Gail Gensler at Gail.Gensler@kingcounty.gov.

~ **CHE-WA and the Children's Environmental Health Forum produce toolkit**

This searchable database allows people to search every topic covered at the 2009 Children's Environmental Health Forum, held in Tukwila, WA October 1-2. [View the toolkit](#)

Announcements and News Highlights

HEFN seeks stories for website to celebrate 10th anniversary

The Health & Environmental Funders Network has launched a new project, "Voices & Visions: Stories from a Movement Creating a Healthier World." This year, HEFN celebrates its 10th anniversary, and over the past decade, this field has seen an enormous amount of growth. This new project aims to highlight and archive the diverse and exciting work that has happened over the past ten years and capture people's visions and hopes for the next ten years. To learn more or submit a story visit <http://www.hefn.org/>

October 2009 issue of Environmental Factor available online

<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/index.cfm>

Toxic Chemicals Found in Doctors and Nurses: new biomonitoring study detects four chemicals on EPA's recently announced top priority list

Physicians for Social Responsibility ([PSR](#)) in partnership with American Nurses Association ([ANA](#)) and Health Care Without Harm ([HCWH](#)) have released the "Hazardous Chemicals In Health Care" report, detailing the first investigation ever of chemicals found in the bodies of health care professionals.

[View the report](#)

Research EU article addresses endocrine-disrupting chemicals in food

[Read the article](#)

Endocrine Society calls for precautionary action

The Endocrine Society, a highly respected international medical society of over 14,000 members in 100 countries, issued a seminal new report stating that exposures to endocrine disrupting chemicals are a growing threat to human health and well-being. The report explicitly states that "the precautionary principle is critical to enhancing health."

For more information on the report, please see: <http://www.endo-society.org/journals/scientificstatements/index.cfm>

Reports, Resources and Other Updates

CHE's searchable calendar

CHE provides a searchable calendar of environmental health events from throughout the US and around the world: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/cgi-bin/searchevents.cgi>

CHE LDDI publishes new Practice Prevention column

This new Practice Prevention column from CHE LDDI details the links between learning and developmental disabilities and exposure to endocrine-disrupting chemicals (EDCs).

[View the column](#)

CHE-WA and the Children's Environmental Health Forum produce toolkit

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[View the toolkit](#)

Campaign for Safe Cosmetics releases second in series of three videos

This second video about the myth of cosmetics safety digs deeper into the hidden, harmful ingredients - like fragrance, formaldehyde and lead - in cosmetics, and how you can help make products safer.

[Watch the first video](#)

[Watch the second video](#)

New database on toxic chemicals in everyday products

A nonprofit environmental research organization released results on over 900 common products tested for toxic chemicals including lead, cadmium, mercury, bromine, chlorine (PVC) and arsenic. Using an XRF analyzer, researchers at the Ecology Center analyzed the ingredients of pet products, cars, women's handbags, children's car seats and more, creating the largest database yet of independent tests of toxic chemicals in consumer goods. The results can be found on the user-friendly

of toxic chemicals in consumer goods. The results can be found on the user-friendly website: www.HealthyStuff.org. Visitors can look up products by manufacturer, brand, or product type and easily generate lists of highly rated and poorly rated products.

Thank you for taking the time to read the latest about CHE. As always, we welcome your questions and suggestions. Please direct comments to Elise Miller, Director of CHE, at elise@healthandenvironment.org.

Best wishes,

Elise Miller, MEd, Director
Steve Heilig, Director of Public Health and Education at San Francisco Medical Society and CHE
Erika Sanders, Administrative Coordinator
Julia Varshavsky, Program Associate

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