



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment

## eNewsletter -- February 2010



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### Trying to take the long view

Dear CHE colleagues:

"Patience is a virtue" is wise counsel in many arenas, including both science and politics. But as 2010 speeds along, much of the American public and media seem consumed by a sense of impatience, if not disappointment, that concerns regarding health care reform, climate change, the economy and other large-scale issues have not moved more quickly towards a positive resolution over this past year. Some of that frustration is of course not only understandable, but appropriate. However, with the scope of problems facing our nation and the world, one year is hardly a fair passage of time to expect fundamental shifts in perspective and direction. Sometimes in our broad field of work a long view is not only justified, but essential.

For a bit of a reality check in CHE's realm, take a look at the reflections of Dr. Linda Birnbaum, who in the new [NIEHS newsletter reflects on her first year](#) as director of that crucial Federal agency. CHE partners will soon have the opportunity to hear from, and talk with, Dr. Birnbaum directly (see details below).

Beyond NIEHS activity, also peruse this newsletter for a number of new scientific and policy developments of note. Though it is hard to see signs of progress and hope in the seeming torrent of bad news, we applaud the extraordinary contributions that so many colleagues are making to improve public health for the long-term. Some of the reports, meetings, activities and working groups listed in this newsletter offer ways to engage in a variety of ways. We hope you will find something of real interest to you and join us in our collective efforts.

Steve Heilig, MPH  
CHE Director of Public Health & Education

**CHE Partnership Call with Linda Birnbaum**  
**New Date: Monday March 15, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern**

[RSVP for this call](#)

CHE is pleased to announce an upcoming Partnership call with Linda Birnbaum, PhD

CHE is pleased to announce an upcoming Partnership call with Linda Birnbaum, PhD, Director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. Dr. Birnbaum will discuss the priorities and challenges facing the NIEHS in the coming years as well as discuss other pressing environmental health concerns.

This call will be moderated by Steve Heilig, Director of Public Health and Education at the San Francisco Medical Society and CHE. It will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

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#### **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:

- January 28, 2010 - [Report from the United Nations Climate Change Conference in Copenhagen: Implications for Human Health](#)
- January 21, 2010 - [Upstream: Complex Chemical Contributors to Thyroid Function and the Potential Impacts on Policy](#)
- January 19, 2010 - CHE Science Cafe call: [A Conversation with Elizabeth Grossman, author of Chasing Molecules](#)
- December 8, 2009 - CHE Fertility/Partnership call: [To Ban or Not to Ban: A Review](#)

And of course, you can always explore our [archived resources](#)

## **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:

~ Leading members of the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative (LDDI), along with other colleagues in the environmental health field, released a new biomonitoring report: ***Mind, Disrupted: How Toxic Chemicals May Affect How We Think and Who We Are*** on February 4th. The official press release occurred just prior to a Senate Hearing on chemical policy reform that took place on February 4 as well. [Read more](#)

~ **CHE-Fertility hosts teleconference: Chemicals and Reproductive Health: The Male Predicament.** This call will take place **TODAY**, Wednesday February 10th at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern. [Read more](#)

### **CHE Autism**

~ **coordinated by Michael Lerner and Sheila Opperman**

~ CHE's new working group on Autism is dedicated to exploring the new paradigm of autism research and treatment in Autistic Spectrum Disorders.

To join CHE Autism contact: [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org)  
[More information on the CHE Autism Working Group](#)

~ **Birth Defect Research for Children released a report on 137 cases of autistic spectrum disorders in the organization's National Birth Defect Registry in mid-January.** This report provides data about the high frequency of physical defects among children with Autistic Spectrum Disorders in an analysis of 137 Autistic Spectrum Disorders in a database of 2030 cases of birth defects in the National Birth Defect Registry. The report also includes the most frequent parental exposures and illnesses recorded for pre-conception and pregnancy. [Download the report](#)

[Download the report](#)

## **CHE-Fertility**

~ coordinated by **Julia Varshavsky, CHE Program Associate,**  
[julia@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:julia@healthandenvironment.org)

~ **CHE-Fertility Call, Chemicals and Reproductive Health: The Male Predicament**  
Are fewer boys being born today than 30 years ago? How might environmental chemicals be playing a role in this phenomenon? How might these chemicals also impact male development and reproductive health in boys that are born? Join us for the next CHE-Fertility call, [Chemicals and Reproductive Health: The Male Predicament](#), scheduled for **Wednesday, February 10 at 11:00 AM Pacific / 2:00 PM Eastern time**, when we will address these questions.

On this call, you will hear presentations highlighting the new video released by The Endocrine Disruption Exchange, [The Male Predicament](#), in addition to new research on male birth defects, brain development and behavior, sex ratios, anogenital distance and prostate cancer.

This call will be moderated by **Elise Miller**, MEd, Director of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment. We will hear a science update from **Ted Schettler**, MD, MPH, Science Director, Science and Environmental Health Network and the Collaborative on Health and the Environment.

### **Featured Presenters:**

- **Theo Colborn**, PhD, President, The Endocrine Disruption Exchange (TEDX) and Professor, University of Florida, Gainesville
- **Shanna Swan**, PhD, Professor of Obstetrics and Gynecology, Associate Chair of Research, Obstetrics and Gynecology, Professor of Environmental Medicine, and Professor of Community and Preventative Medicine, University of Rochester, School of Medicine and Dentistry
- **Fred vom Saal**, PhD, Professor, University of Missouri, Columbia, Division of Biological Sciences

**Dial-in Number: 1-218-936-4700**  
**Passcode: 516764#**

Please RSVP to [julia@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:julia@healthandenvironment.org) if you haven't already so that we can reserve an accurate number of lines.

~ **New Resource: Clinical Proceedings from Planned Parenthood and ARHP:**  
Planned Parenthood and the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals have just released an accredited clinical monograph on Environmental Impacts on Reproductive Health. The purpose of the monograph is to provide front-line clinicians with practical guidance on environmental reproductive health issues, based on the best available evidence.

[Read more on the clinical proceedings](#)

~ **ACOG Educates Lawmakers About Environmental Health:** On Tuesday, January 19, 2010, the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists (ACOG) held a legislative briefing at the California State Capitol to educate policymakers on the impacts of pesticides to women's health. Presenters included Robin Johnson, District IX Committee of State Legislation, Director, Family Engagement Program, LA Best Babies Network; Tracey Woodruff, Associate Professor and Director, Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, UCSF; and Martha Arguello, Executive Director, Physicians for Social Responsibility-Los Angeles. The event was co-sponsored by CHE-Fertility and other partners in the field. For more information, contact Robin Finnestead at 916-446-ACOG (2264) or email [rfinnestead@ca.acog.org](mailto:rfinnestead@ca.acog.org).

~ **New Pamphlet for Expecting Moms:** The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) has developed a color, folded, cross-cultural pamphlet to be given to women at Ob-Gyn appointments. This educational pamphlet explains environmental risks at home, in the workplace, and outdoors and is intended for use in clinics and doctors offices around the country. Contributing partners include the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), American College of Nurse-Midwives, and the

Disabilities Association of America (DAA), American College of Nurse Practitioners, and the V.A. women's health program, with funding from the John Merck Fund. A Spanish version of the pamphlet will be available shortly.

[Download the pamphlet](#)

~ **UCSF Highlights PRHE's Toxic Matters Brochure:** The University of California, San Francisco released a press release this month to highlight the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment's (PRHE) Toxic Matters brochure.

The press release quotes Dr. Tracey Woodruff, Director of PRHE: "Our goal is to engage the clinical community and consumers through education and access to resources to protect this and the next generation from environmental exposures," said Tracey Woodruff, PhD, MPH. "We've identified key areas where exposures are constant and avoidable, and a means for individuals to contact government representatives to prevent impacts of environmental contaminants on future generations. Although certain groups are most vulnerable, toxic substances in the environment affect every person, every day and are the responsibility of all of us," she said.

The Toxic Matters brochure was created by an alliance of partners (including CHE) led by PRHE and offers practical recommendations on five ways to avoid exposure to toxic substances - in the home, at work, in the community, at the market and through influencing government policy - for women, men and children that apply to everyone regardless of whether a person is pregnant or planning to have children in the future.

[Read more and download the brochure](#)

## CHE LDDI

~coordinated by **Laura Abulafia**, [laura@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:laura@healthandenvironment.org) and **Elise Miller**, CHE Director, [elise@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org)

~ **LDDI members released a new biomonitoring report, *Mind, Disrupted: How Toxic Chemicals May Affect How We Think and Who We Are*** in Washington, DC on February 4, 2010.

Several questions prompted the undertaking of this project: What role might environmental toxics play in undermining healthy development of the brain and nervous system? How might certain environmental pollutants exacerbate the health conditions of those who already have a learning, developmental or behavioral disorder? The report is intended to spotlight these pressing questions and inspire prompt actions to reduce exposures that may impair how we think -- and, in the most basic ways, who we are. Twelve leaders and self-advocates from the learning and developmental disabilities community stepped forward to try and answer these questions by having their bodies tested for the presence of a set of known or suspected neurotoxic or endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

The report was released prior to a Senate Hearing of the Environment and Public Works Subcommittee on Superfund, Toxics and Environmental Health, convened by the chairman of the committee, Senator Frank R. Lautenberg (D-NJ).

[Visit the new Mind, Disrupted website](#)

[Listen to the report release teleconference](#)

[Read more about LDDI and learning and developmental disabilities partners](#)

[Read various articles highlighting the Mind, Disrupted report](#)

~ **A Congressional Briefing** on the LDDI biomonitoring project is currently scheduled in Washington, DC for Friday, February 19th on the House side. For more information, please contact Laura Abulafia with LDDI, at [laura@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:laura@healthandenvironment.org).

~ **The Learning Disability Association of America's annual medical symposium** on environmental health will be held in Baltimore, MD, on Wednesday February 17th. The first part of the symposium will feature participants in the LDDI biomonitoring project. For more information, please contact Maureen Swanson at [mswanson@ldaamerica.org](mailto:mswanson@ldaamerica.org).

~ **LDDI's website** is now fully transferred to its new location and is also accessible through a new URL that's more meaningful and easier to remember: [www.disabilityandenvironment.org](http://www.disabilityandenvironment.org). Please update the links on your websites to use this

new URL.

~ **The Mental Health and Environment Working Group** has released two new resources: a *Health Care Resource: Links between Pesticide Exposure and Mental Health* and *Mental Health Effects Arising from Pesticide Exposure: A Guide for Healthcare Providers and Mental Health Practitioners*.

Download both resources from the Mental Health and Environment Working Group web page

For more information, contact Ed Seliger: [eseliger@thenadd.org](mailto:eseliger@thenadd.org)

~ National **Autism Society** executives just returned from Autism Education Week in Colorado, where Donna Ferullo, Director of the Environmental Health Program of the Autism Society of America, gave a talk on Autism and Environment at the JFK Partners Medical School complex at University of Colorado Medical Center. The Autism Society is also in full planning mode for their annual conference to be held in Dallas in July, which will include a science symposium focused on environmental health and brain effects. Visit ASA's website for more information

## CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

### CHE Alaska

~ coordinated by Pam Miller, [pkmiller@akaction.net](mailto:pkmiller@akaction.net)

~ Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) sponsors monthly statewide teleconference seminars as part of our Alaska Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE-AK).

Please join ACAT/CHE-AK on **Wednesday February 24, 2010 at 9:00 AM Alaska / 10 AM Pacific** for a discussion with **Mind, Disrupted** project leaders and participants.

*Mind, Disrupted: How Toxic Chemicals May Change How We Think and Who We Are* examines 61 toxic chemicals found in the bodies of study participants in the context of rising rates of autism, attention-deficit hyperactivity disorder, and other learning and developmental disabilities.

#### Guest speakers:

- **Ann WingQuest**, project participant and Individual Service Provider for the Arc of Anchorage
- **Laura Abulafia**, MHS, project participant and National Coordinator of the Learning and Developmental Disabilities Initiative
- **Sharyle Patton**, Director, Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center
- **David O. Carpenter**, MD, public health physician and director of the Institute for Health and the Environment, University at Albany, State University of New York

To join this free call and receive the dial-up instructions, please RSVP to Alaska Community Action on Toxics at [diana@akaction.org](mailto:diana@akaction.org) or (907) 222-7714.

### CHE-HEAL

~ coordinated by Lisette van Vliet, [Lisette@env-health.org](mailto:Lisette@env-health.org)

~ **REACH list of dangerous chemicals doubled:** The European Chemicals Agency (ECHA) has added 14 substances to the list of "very high concern" chemicals to undergo special health and safety scrutiny under the bloc's chemical regulation REACH.

View the REACH list of substances of very high concern

~ **Cancer-linked pesticides used in school - new survey:** Children may be being exposed to at least four potentially cancer causing pesticides that are being used in schools in England, Scotland, and Wales, according to the findings of a new survey by the European NGOs, Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Pesticides Action Network UK (PAN UK).

The report is part of HEAL's wider campaign, Sick of Pesticides ([www.pesticidescancer.eu](http://www.pesticidescancer.eu)), currently running in France and the UK, which works to highlight the adverse health

effects of pesticides and provide educational, advocacy and legal tools for local health and patient groups, schools and farmers to become involved in policy change. This year, the national governments of the European Union are starting to prepare their pesticide reduction plans for a 2012 deadline. The Sick of Pesticides campaign will expand to three more countries; Belgium, the Netherlands and Hungary.

~ **Pan European Ministerial Conference on Environment and Health:** The Health and Environment ministers of the 53 countries in the European region of the World Health Organisation will be meeting at the Fifth Ministerial Conference on environment and health in Italy on 10-12 March. The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) secretariat and member organisations, and partner NGOs have been closely involved in this process, and are coordinating the participation of representatives from the health and environment NGO community from across the European region.

~ **Climate change: European health groups call for a 40% target on emissions reductions:** Following the United Nations talks on climate change in Copenhagen in December 2009, countries are to submit targets for emissions reductions. The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm Europe are calling on the 27 Heads of State in the European Union to increase the EU target on emissions reductions to 40%, which would bring substantial benefits in improving people's health and reducing health care costs. For more information, see the Prescription for a Healthy Planet campaign at [www.climateandhealthcare.org](http://www.climateandhealthcare.org).

### **CHE Oregon**

~ coordinated by Renee Hackenmiller-Paradis, [reneep@oeonline.org](mailto:reneep@oeonline.org)

#### **~ Confluences: Water and Justice symposium to be held at University of Portland:**

This symposium is being held at the University of Portland March 26-28, 2010, bringing together some of the nation's leading experts to examine various perspectives on water, including environmental justice, protection, science, theology, business, history, law, and the Native American perspective.

The symposium opens Friday afternoon, March 26, with a lecture and cruise on the Willamette River followed by a screening of The Water Front, a documentary film on water rights in Michigan. Afterward, director Liz Miller answers questions.

On Saturday, March 27, and Sunday, March 28, over twenty experts share their expertise in concurrent sessions. Most sessions pair speakers of different viewpoints to promote discussion. Maude Barlow - author, activist, and senior advisor on water to the president of the UN General Assembly - gives the keynote address on Saturday night.

Conference registration is free. Tickets for Maude Barlow's keynote are \$10 per person; free for ILLAHEE season ticket holders, conference hosts and sponsors, and University of Portland faculty, staff, and students.

### **CHE Washington**

~ coordinated by Steve Gilbert, [sgilbert@innd.org](mailto:sgilbert@innd.org) or contact [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org)

~ **Forum Presentations Online:** Videos from presentations at the Northwest Children's Environmental Health Forum in October have all been added to the Forum web page: [www.chenw.org/CEHforum.html](http://www.chenw.org/CEHforum.html)

## **Announcements and News Highlights**

### **EPA is Now Accepting Applications for its National Environmental Leadership Award in Asthma Management**

If you are a health plan, health care provider or community in action that has demonstrated leadership in managing environmental asthma triggers as part of your

comprehensive asthma management program, apply to receive recognition for your important work. Applications are due by March 16, 2010.

[More information](#)

### **2nd Annual Northwest Environmental Health Conference to be held in Oregon March 5 -6, 2010**

The Oregon Environmental Council, the Oregon Student Nurses Association, the Oregon Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, Multnomah County Environmental Health Services, Health Care Without Harm and others are organizing the **Second Annual NW Environmental Health Conference**. Registration opens December 14, 2009.

[More information](#)

### **February 2010 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online**

<http://ehp03.niehs.nih.gov/home.action>

### **February 2010 issue of Environmental Factor available online**

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

## **Reports, Resources and Other Updates**

### **Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health releases summary report of CCCEH and WE ACT's 2009 Translating Science to Policy conference**

Over 400 scientists, public officials, community leaders, and advocates for environmental health attended the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH) and WE ACT for Environmental Justice (WE ACT) March 30 conference on "**Translating Science to Policy: Protecting Children's Environmental Health**." The purpose of symposium was to review 10 years of research findings from the Center and other scientists, discuss interventions stemming from this research, and identify strategies to advance policies that will reduce and prevent environmentally-related diseases such as asthma, developmental disorders, and cancer in children living in urban communities. Lisa P. Jackson, administrator of the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and Linda S. Birnbaum, director of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS), gave keynote speeches. The conference proceedings are described in the [2009 Translating Science to Policy conference report](#).

[Visit CCCEH's website](#)

### **Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families releases new health report**

Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families has released a new health report, **The Health Case for Reforming the Toxic Substances Control Act**. This report summarizes some of the scientific studies documenting that chemicals are contributing to the growing burden of chronic disease in the US, and offers an analysis of the economic benefits of reform.

[Read the report](#)

### **FDA, Health Organizations to Study Safety of Medications Taken During Pregnancy**

A new research program called the Medication Exposure in Pregnancy Risk Evaluation Program (MEPREP) will fund research to study the effects of prescription medications used during pregnancy. The program is a collaboration among the U.S. Food and Drug Administration and researchers at the HMO Research Network Center for Education and Research in Therapeutics (CERT), Kaiser Permanente's multiple research centers and Vanderbilt University.

[Read more](#)

### **Prenatal Exposure to Flame Retardant Compounds Affects Neurodevelopment of Young Children**

Researchers at the Columbia Center for Children's Environmental Health (CCCEH) have released a new paper that finds prenatal exposure to ambient levels of flame retardant compounds called polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are associated with adverse

neurodevelopment effects in young children. This study is the first in the U.S. to analyze the developmental effects of prenatal exposure to PBDEs in a cohort of children who were enrolled prenatally and followed through age 6.

[Read the CCCEH press release](#)

[Read the paper published in \*Environmental Health Perspectives\*](#)

CHE lists hundred of reports, books, videos, databases and other resources in a searchable [Portal to Science](#) on CHE's website.

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](mailto: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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