



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter - August 2010



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## Early Puberty: Another Sign of Our (Chemical) Times?

A major study released earlier this week in *Pediatrics* concluded that girls are starting puberty earlier than ever. (See the [New York Times article](#); Full text of study at: <http://pediatrics.aappublications.org/cgi/reprint/peds.2009-3079v1>). Though early puberty is influenced by multiple and interacting factors, including heredity, socioeconomic status, obesity, premature birth, formula feeding and more, synthetic chemicals, particularly those that can disrupt our bodies' normal hormonal messaging systems from conception onward, are increasingly considered contributors to this growing concern.

Controversy about whether earlier puberty was in fact happening was significantly heightened after a study suggesting similar findings was published in *Pediatrics* in 1997. However, questions about the association between chemical exposures and health problems from breast cancer to reproductive abnormalities can easily be dated back to the time of Rachel Carson's research. Dr. Sandra Steingraber's 2007 report, "The Falling Age of Puberty: What We Know, What We Need to Know," commissioned by the Breast Cancer Fund, was based on a comprehensive review of the literature on the timing of puberty. Given the scientific evidence, the report recommended a set of actions--from improving the built environment to encourage physical activity to making healthy food more accessible to reducing the use of endocrine disrupting chemicals, such as phthalates and bisphenol A, in consumer products. What is notable about these recommendations is that they could curb not only the worrisome implications of earlier and earlier puberty, but a plethora of other chronic diseases and disabilities that currently plague our country.

Given it is far harder to turn an ocean liner around, than a row boat, many leading thinkers underscore the need for creative solutions to be generated on the community level in order to develop effective, sustainable models. One such person is Wilma Subra, a leading resource scientist for low-income communities in the Gulf Coast. Michael Lerner will interview Dr. Subra on our CHE Partnership call tomorrow ([visit the call page to RSVP](#)). Other leaders emphasize that reforming our chemical regulatory system on a national level must be a priority. Action is also being taken along those lines with the introduction of "Toxic Chemicals Safety Act" in the House just late last month (see <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/articles/homepage/7542>).

At whatever level you choose to approach this work, the study on early puberty published in *Pediatrics* this week only affirms that we, in fact, already know what we need to do. The harder part is how to do it--how to implement effective and strategic interventions at all these levels of society. As a CHE partner, we hope you will continue to participate in our calls and working groups to help us collectively figure out what we can do now to ensure that health is a birthright, not an afterthought.

Elise Miller, MEd  
Director  
Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)

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This essay is available on [CHE's blog](#) for comment and further discussion.

## CHE Partnership Calls and Special Events

**New CHE feature:** CHE has begun podcasting Partnership and working group call recordings. Subscribe to the podcast at: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/Calls.xml>

**CHE Cafe call:**

**On the Ground in the Gulf Coast: A Conversation with Wilma Subra and Michael Lerner**

**Thursday, August 12 at 10 AM PST / 1 PM EST**

[RSVP for this call](#)

Wilma Subra is one of the foremost resource scientists for low-income communities in the Gulf Coast. This MacArthur Prize winning chemist has dedicated her career to helping low income communities get the facts they need about their chemical exposures and the implications for their health. She has worked tirelessly since the BP oil disaster to help communities and disaster workers understand their exposures. This conversation will bring the CHE community up to date on her latest findings.

Michael Lerner will facilitate this call. He is Vice-Chair and co-founder of the Collaborative on Health and the Environment. He is also president of Commonweal, a health and environment institute in Bolinas, CA.

**Special note:**

*To assist CHE in better evaluating and planning Partnership calls CHE will send out a short survey to all call participants after each call. If you participate in an upcoming CHE call, please look for the post-call survey, and help CHE plan for future teleconferences and events.*

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**Special Event:**

**CHE Co-hosts Children First Symposium: Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child**

**October 1, 2010**

**Mission Bay Conference Center, University of California, San Francisco**

Pediatric Integrative Medicine embraces a holistic, whole-child approach, specifically examining the context - the ecology - in which optimal health and wellness is promoted. This groundbreaking one-day symposium will highlight a range of interacting factors that influence child health and development, including nutrition, education, socio-economic

status, exposures to toxic chemicals, and access to preventative health care. Hosted by CHE, The Whole Child Center and the UCSF Osher Center for Integrative Medicine. Registration is \$50, and includes continental breakfast and lunch. Seating is limited.

[Read more](#), including a complete symposium description, current agenda, full list of speakers and registration information.

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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:

- July 29, 2010 - [The Human Health Effects of the Gulf Coast Oil Spill: A Summary of the IOM Workshop](#)
- June 10, 2010 - [Nanotechnology: A New Chapter in Environmental Health Sciences](#)
- May 18, 2010 - [The President's Cancer Panel Report: "Reducing Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now"](#)
- May 11, 2010 - [The Information Age and EMF/RF Illness](#)
- May 4, 2010 - [CHE Cafe call with Annie Leonard, \*The Story of Stuff\*](#)

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:**

**CHE Alaska** will host a teleconference with Elizabeth Grossman, author of *Chasing Molecules*.

[Read more](#)

#### **Stay in touch with CHE via Facebook and the CHE blog:**

Visit CHE's blog at <http://ourhealthandenvironment.wordpress.com/>

CHE's [Facebook page](#)

#### **CHE-EMF**

~ coordinated by Cindy Sage, [sage@silcom.com](mailto:sage@silcom.com) and Nancy Evans, [nancywrite@comcast.net](mailto:nancywrite@comcast.net)

~ **New CHE-EMF call announced: *Wireless SmartMeters: What are the health, personal safety, wireless security and excessive billing issues all about and what can consumers do now?***

August 25, 2010 at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern

[RSVP for this call](#)

Utilities are rolling out nearly 16 million new wireless 'smart meters' for gas and electricity, replacing the old meters with new wireless transmitters. The public is just becoming aware of this significant, new source of chronic, involuntary radiofrequency which is of the same type as cell phones and cell towers emit. CHE-EMF has been a leading international forum for expert dialogue on EMF concerns such as 'smart meters' for several years now, and is hosting this call to further explore the potential health-related implications as well as wider concerns associated with this technology. CHE's

particular concern with this issue is the health risks these meters may pose through life-long exposure to this new and significant EMF source, especially in the home.

On Tuesday, August 25, 2010 at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern Cindy Sage will present a summary review of the concerns with 'smart meters'. Cindy is co-facilitator of CHE-EMF and lead co-founder of BioInitiative.org, a multi-author report on EMF concerns that is widely recognized as an international science resource. Michael Lerner will explore some of the 'smart meter' concerns with Cindy and then open the dialogue to all call participants.

This call is sponsored by CHE-EMF and open to all interested CHE Partners. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

## **CHE-Fertility**

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

~ **New Science: Girls Hit Puberty at Younger Ages:** This finding was covered by a number of mainstream media outlets, including the Wall Street Journal, Times Magazine, Los Angeles Times, and NPR.

Link to a listing of this coverage on the [Environmental Health News website](#)

~ **Erin Switalski Featured as a Care2 "Trailblazer For Good":** Women's Voices for the Earth's (WVE) Executive Director, Erin Switalski, was chosen by the New Leaders Council as one of the winners of "40 under 40", a group that exemplifies "the spirit of political entrepreneurship." Her article, "Fighter Pilot," was featured on Care2's website highlighting the winners.

[Read the article](#)

~ **New Scientific Commentary on PBDEs and Health Disparities:** CHE partners Ami Zota, ScD, Postdoctoral Research Fellow at the University of California, San Francisco Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, and Rachel Morello-Frosch, PhD, MPH, Associate Professor in the Department of Environmental Science, Policy & Management at the University of California, Berkeley, along with Gary Adamkiewicz at the Harvard School of Public Health, published an author's viewpoint, titled "Are PBDEs an environmental equity concern? Exposure disparities by socioeconomic status" in journal, Environmental Science & Technology.

[Link to the commentary](#)

~ **Blog on the Human and Reproductive Health Impacts of the Gulf Oil Spill:** Kimberly Inez McGuire, Senior Associate of Programs and Policy for the Reproductive Health Technologies Project, wrote a piece titled, "The Unseen Spill: The Human and Reproductive Health Catastrophe of Toxic "Hot Spots" in the Gulf Region", which takes an interesting look at the links between the environmental crisis and our reproductive health.

[Read the blog](#)

~ **New book released:** Tracey Woodruff and UCSF Ob/GYN & R.S. Department Chair, Linda Giudice, MD, PhD, along with Sarah Janssen, MD, PhD, MPH, from UCSF and the Natural Resources Defense Council and Louis J. Guillette, PhD, from the University of Florida, Gainesville, edited the recently published book titled, "Environmental Impacts on Reproductive Health and Fertility." The book addresses reproductive and developmental health problems caused by exposure to chemicals that are readily found in the environment in which we live. For more information on the book, please check out the Cambridge University Press website: <http://tiny.cc/3y0ew>

~ **Two New Job Opportunities at PRHE:** The Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment (PRHE) at the University of California, San Francisco, is now hiring for two positions. One is a research coordinator to work on epidemiology studies related to prenatal chemical exposures and a postdoc for a project on translating scientific

information into clinical care and policy. For a full description about each of these positions, please contact Jason Harless at [harlessj@obgyn.ucsf.edu](mailto:harlessj@obgyn.ucsf.edu).

## **CHE-LDDI**

~ coordinated by Erika Hagensen, [ehagensen@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:ehagensen@healthandenvironment.org) and Elise Miller, CHE Director, [elise@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org)

~ **Senate Hearing on Environmental Contributors to Autism:** The Senate Subcommittee on Children's Health of the Environmental and Public Works Committee held a hearing on August 3 entitled: the "State of Research on Potential Environmental Health Factors with Autism and Related Neurodevelopmental Disorders." The Committee wanted to understand the state of neurodevelopmental research on the causes and treatment of autism and other neurodevelopmental conditions, specifically the relationship between environmental and genetic factors.

[Read more](#)

~ **The next Mental Health and Environment working group meeting** will take place on Thursday, August 26, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern. To learn more about the initiatives of this working group visit the [working group's webpage](#). To join the working group contact [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org).

~ **Research and Science teleconference on Tuesday August 31st from 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time.** Sherry Everett Jones, PhD, MPH, JD, FASHA, will present on School Health Policies and Program Study 2006 to make up for the technical difficulties experienced in her previously planned session. The School Health Policies and Programs Study (SHPPS) is a national survey periodically conducted to assess school health policies and programs at the state, district, school and classroom levels. SHPPS 2006 provides a comprehensive look at the extent to which schools have health-promoting physical school environment policies and programs. This presentation will provide an overview of SHPPS and findings for topics such as inspection of school physical facilities; school plans for dealing with mold and moisture-related issues; indoor air-quality management; pest management procedures; purchase of low-emitting products; testing of drinking water; and the use, labeling, storage and disposal of hazardous materials. For more information, contact [Laura Abulafia](#).

~ **Aging, Environmental Health, and IDD Teleconference Series.** This fall, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) with Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR) and our distinguished panels of guest speakers bring you a groundbreaking series of teleconference calls on aging, environmental health and disability. Scheduled webinars include these:

- 1) "Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging" with Ted Schettler and Maria Valenti  
Tuesday October 12th, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time
- 2) "Built Environment" with Kathy Sykes, Rodney Harrell and Regina Gray  
Tuesday October 19th, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time
- 3) "Psychosocial Environment" with Danny George and Peter Whitehouse  
Tuesday October 26th, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time
- 4) "Chemical Environment" with Maye Thompson and Marybeth Palmigiano  
Tuesday November 2nd, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time
- 5) "Food Environment" with Michelle Gottlieb and Emma Sirois  
Tuesday November 9th, 2:00-3:00 p.m. Eastern time

For more information, please visit AAIDD's [Teleconference webpage](#).

## **CHE Regional Working Groups Updates**

## CHE ALASKA

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

### ~ **New CHE-AK call announced: Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health and the Promise of Green Chemistry: A discussion with author Elizabeth Grossman**

September 15, 2010 at 9 AM Alaska / 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

[RSVP for this call](#)

Many dangerous chemicals from chemical manufacturing facilities and industrial agriculture operations around the world end up in the Arctic and stay there. Originating in Asia and southern latitudes, persistent organic pollutants (POPs) hitchhike on wind and ocean currents and accumulate in the fish, wildlife, and people who call the far north home. Among those who bear a disproportionate burden of global contaminants are Arctic Indigenous peoples who depend on berries, greens, fish, and marine mammals for subsistence.

Author Elizabeth Grossman highlights the ongoing struggle for environmental health and justice of the St. Lawrence Island Yupik people in her award-winning book *Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health and the Promise of Green Chemistry*. With *Chasing Molecules*, Grossman reveals that we can do better; that we can make materials that we have come to rely on with chemicals that have been tested to be safe and are in fact "benign by design." In a radical departure from how synthetic chemistry has been practiced, Grossman suggests that green chemistry should be used to create new materials for use in everything from sippy cups to carpets.

Join us for a discussion with Grossman on **September 15, 2010 at 9 AM Alaska / 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern** as we explore the local and global sources of contamination in Alaska and how the promise of green chemistry could help stem the tide of persistent chemicals that are polluting the Arctic.

## CHE-HEAL

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

~ The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL), the World Wildlife Fund and CHEM Trust have published a new brochure: "Chemical Cocktails: Harmful Mixtures Upset our Hormones".

[Download the brochure](#)

## Announcements and News Highlights

**August 2010 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online**

[Read more](#)

**August 2010 issue of Environmental Factor available online**

[Read more](#)

CHE maintains a [newsfeed](#) of environmental health related news announcements and events collected from a multitude of sources on CHE's website.

## Reports, Resources and Other Updates

### **Just Released: Analysis of HR 5820 and Reproductive Health**

The Reproductive Health Technologies Project just released a two-page analysis that distills the critical components of the Toxic Chemicals Safety Act (HR 5820) with a focus

specifically on the impacts for reproductive health.

[Link to the analysis](#)

**Women's Voices for the Earth releases translation**

WVE has released *Que Es Ese Olor*, the translated version of their groundbreaking report on hidden toxic chemicals in fragranced cleaning products.

[View the translated report](#)

**Centers for Disease Control and Prevention posted updated data tables, July 2010**

The CDC posted on its website updated data tables for the "National Report on Human Exposure to Environmental Chemicals", an ongoing assessment of the US population's exposure to environmental chemicals using laboratory technology known as biomonitoring.

[Read more](#)

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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