



Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter - January 2011



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The Science Behind Unconventional Connections

What do contaminants in cord blood and climate change have in common? One answer: fossil fuels. Last week, a study published in *Environmental Science and Technology* showed how 87 commonly found chemicals pass efficiently from mother to fetus during pregnancy and a vast majority of those chemicals are derived from petroleum <http://pubs.acs.org/cgi-bin/cen/trustedproxy.cgi?redirect=http://pubs.acs.org/doi/abs/10.1021/es1019614>. Last month, at the U.N. climate change talks in Cancun, side events sponsored by NGOs highlighted rising health concerns for children and other vulnerable populations related to climate change. Climate change, as scientists have demonstrated repeatedly, has in large part been catalyzed by the widespread development and use of petrochemicals and their by products, which are fast changing the delicate balance of our earth's systems. In other words, fossil fuels are us, inside and out-with huge economic and social consequences for human and ecological health.

We can all point to numerous reasons why we continue to invest far more in the extraction of oil, coal and natural gas, rather than using those research dollars to develop renewable energy technologies. Most of these reasons can be enumerated, in their essence, as expressions of some of the least desirable human qualities: greed, indifference and fear. When jobs are few, foreclosures are high, and the future feels more tenuous than ever, our inclination is to become even more myopic. We try to glean any short-term gain, rather than realizing that those short-term "wins" are only leading us further down the rabbit hole and diminishing the chances of our children and grandchildren ever eating wild salmon, drinking from glacial streams, and intimately knowing the features of the land that sustains us-not to mention, living without the shadow of ever-increasing chronic diseases and disabilities.

How do we move from being a reactionary culture that focuses primarily on finding cures and developing more sophisticated technologies that address symptoms not

systems, to being a society committed to primary prevention and to sustaining the natural riches of the earth for generations to come?

Most of you have pondered this question in one form or another, likely for decades, and have chosen a path to catalyze positive change based on your particular interests, skills and gifts whether as a scientist or a community advocate. CHE's response in trying to address this question is to:

- provide a variety of forums in which emerging health science on everything from contaminants to climate change can be discussed with civility;
- encourage those in health-affected sectors to become informed spokespeople on the science and to promote health-centered reforms on local, state, national and international levels;
- incubate and facilitate cross-disciplinary and cross-sectoral initiatives; and
- articulate an ever-evolving framework for understanding how multiple, cumulative and interacting factors impact health across the lifespan; and
- promote a primary prevention-oriented, systems approach to improve and protect human and ecological health over time.

This month, we are very pleased to offer a CHE partner conference call entitled "Cumulative Impacts and Environmental Justice: A Conversation with Dr. Manuel Pastor," facilitated by Sharyle Patton, that will focus on how racial discrimination continues to be one of the strongest currents undermining the health and well-being of countless communities around the country [[Read more](#)]. We have also helped plan an environmental health science and advocacy training in which representatives of close to 20 different health professional groups and health-affected organizations will participate on January 24th in Washington, DC. In addition, in early February, we are hosting a conference call on marines with breast cancer who were exposed to contaminated drinking water and organizing a call on the experience of NGOs working on health issues at the UN Climate Change talks in Cancun.

In short, our work is about making unconventional connections between seemingly disparate health concerns based on cutting-edge, evidence-based environmental health science. Please plug into our efforts in whatever ways you find most useful and inspiring.

With warm wishes for the New Year,
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

CHE Partnership call:

Cumulative Impacts and Environmental Justice: A conversation with Manuel Pastor

Tuesday January 18, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. PST / 1:00 p.m. EST

[RSVP for this call](#)

Given racial discrimination continues to be one of the strongest currents undermining the health and well-being of countless communities around the country, CHE is privileged to host a conversation with Manuel Pastor, PhD, professor of Geography and American Studies & Ethnicity at the University of Southern California, on a partner call scheduled for **Tuesday January 18, 2011 at 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 1:00 p.m. Eastern**. Dr. Pastor's groundbreaking research has generally focused on issues of environmental justice, regional inclusion, and the economic and social conditions facing low-income urban communities. He has co-authored *Uncommon Common Ground: Race and America's Future* (2010) and *Searching for the Uncommon Common Ground: New Dimensions on Race in America* (2002), and authored numerous other influential publications and articles. For additional information on Dr. Pastor, please see: http://cjtc.ucsc.edu/l_manuelPastor.html

The call will be moderated by Sharyle Patton, CHE's Director of Special Projects. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

Special Events:

CHE Environmental Health Training For Moms

The Collaborative on Health and Environment, in partnership with MOMS (Making Our Milk Safe), will host a training to teach mothers about environmental health science on March 2-4, 2011. Our goal is to give moms a basic scientific understanding so that they can be more confident as advocates for a healthier world. The training will primarily focus on evidence-based science in lay language that can be used for advocacy. Applications are now being accepted.

[Learn more and apply](#)

Bay Area Event: Dr. Margaret Kripke on the President's Cancer Panel

Commonweal and Breast Cancer Fund invite you to a special evening with Dr. Margaret Kripke, co-author of the President's Cancer Panel Report *Environmental Cancer Risk: What We Can Do Now*. The report, which informs the National Cancer Program, has brought unprecedented attention to the environmental exposures that increase cancer risk. The event takes place on February 7 from 6 to 8 p.m. at the Fort Mason Center in San Francisco. For more details, please see <http://www.breastcancerfund.org/kripke>.

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:

- December 8, 2010 - [2010: Environmental Health Highlights of the Year](#)
- November 15, 2010 - [Sacrifice Zones: The Front Lines of Toxic Chemical Exposure in the US](#)
- November 9, 2010 - [Fracking: Implications for Human and Environmental Health](#)
- October 28, 2010 - [State of the Evidence: The Connection Between Breast Cancer and the Environment](#)
- October 12, 2010 - [Living Downstream: A Conversation with Sandra Steingraber and Chanda Chevannes](#)

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

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 and Nancy Evans, nancywrite@comcast.net

~ **New Smart Meter Report Published:** Sage Associates has published an online report titled Assessment of Radiofrequency Radiation Emissions from Smart Meters. This report is prepared in support of open discussion on radiofrequency microwave radiation levels (RF radiation levels) that are produced by wireless electric meters (i.e., smart meters) in California. There has been virtually no information made available to the public, nor to decision-makers on RF radiation levels. Significant unanswered questions still exist about what levels of radiofrequency microwave radiation will be produced by these meters.

This question has very important consequences for public health and welfare, because the public may be subjected to exposures at levels that either violate federal safety limits, or face chronic exposure levels that have already been associated with adverse health impacts, or both.

[Download the report](#)

CHE Fertility

~ coordinated by Karin Russ, CHE Fertility National Coordinator, karin@healthandenvironment.org

~ **Father's diet can affect future child's health, UT study says:** father's poor eating habits could make his future children sick, suggests new research on mice involving the University of Texas. The study found that male mice who ate a low-protein diet passed on to their offspring cellular changes in their livers that affect fat and cholesterol metabolism. Austin American-Statesman, Texas. 9 January 2011.

[Read more](#)

~ **Long-term space flight may be a problem for human reproduction:** The near-zero gravity of Earth orbit may do serious harm to the male and female reproductive systems, a University of Kansas Medical Center biologist has discovered. Kansas City Star, Missouri. 5 January 2011.

[Read more](#)

CHE Healthy Aging Initiative

~ coordinated by Maria Valenti, mvalenti@igc.org

~ **Webinars and interactive online discussions:** The CDC Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) and Creating Aging-Friendly Communities has been conducting a series of webinars and interactive online discussions since Fall 2010 entitled Environmental & Policy Change for Healthy Aging. CHE Healthy Aging Science advisor Ted Schettler, MD, MPH, will be a panelist for the **January 18th, 2011 webinar Vision to Reality: Special Challenges & Opportunities in Environmental and Policy Change** as the final module of the series. Ted will be joined by co-panelist Lenard W. Kaye, D.S.W., Ph.D, Director, Center on Aging, College of Business, Public Policy & Health, University of Maine. The session will be moderated by Rebecca Hunter, M.Ed., University of North Carolina and CDC-HAN. To register or view the online presentations, webinars, and resources from September 2010 through January 2011 go to: <http://agingfriendly.org/>

The CDC Healthy Aging Research Network (HAN) works nationally to understand the determinants of healthy aging, identify interventions that promote healthy aging, and translate those interventions into sustainable community-based programs. Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging is referenced in the HAN policy brief "Building Communities to

Support Healthy Aging" for the CDC's healthy aging network.

~ **The Built Environment and Healthy Aging:** On December 9th a webinar presentation for the Association of University Centers on Disabilities ([AUCD](#)), CDC Cooperative Agreement grantees, on the Built Environment and Healthy Aging, was presented by Dr. Rodney Harrell from [AARP's Public Policy Institute](#), and Kathy Sykes of [EPA's Aging Initiative](#). This was a result of series of five webinars on healthy aging supported by CHE and sponsored by CHE partner the Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities ([AAIDD](#)). The recording is now available in our [AUCD Webinar Library Archive](#), under the title Built Environment, Disability, and Health Aging.

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE Alaska

~ coordinated by Pam Miller, Alaska Community Action, pkmiller@akaction.net

~ **New CHE-AK call announced:** Health Hazards of Toxic Flame Retardants in Everyday Products: Current Scientific Evidence and the Need for Protective Public Health Policies

Wednesday, January 26, 2011 at 9:00 a.m. Alaska / 10:00 a.m. Pacific / 1:00 p.m. Eastern

Polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) are widely used flame retardant chemicals found at high levels in home furniture, electronics, insulation, and other products. PBDEs are persistent and bioaccumulative and therefore have become ubiquitous environmental contaminants found in our air, water, and foods. They also have the potential to act as endocrine disruptors. Read more.

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

CHE-HEAL

~ coordinated by Lisette van Vliet, lisette@env-health.org

~ **Putting health at the centre of global climate talks:** The UNFCCC Cancun Climate Negotiations in December 2010 not only saw an agreement on climate financing and the need to keep global temperature rise below two degrees, but also an increased awareness of the numerous negative effects on peoples' health from climate change. HEAL brought a delegation ([view more information](#)) of health and medical professionals to the negotiations to remind decision-makers that reducing greenhouse gasses is good for the climate, national economies and peoples' health. This message was highlighted in the Climate and Health Statement launched by HEAL and nine other international environment and medical organisations.

Findings from HEAL and Health Care Without Harm's recent report, [Acting NOW for better health: A 30% reduction target for EU climate policy](#) were presented at a key World Health Organization meeting in Cancun and used extensively in health policy discussions during the talks.

All activities from HEAL's health delegation are available on the [HEAL climate and health webpage](#).

~ **Addressing the "missing link" in cancer prevention - European Cancer and Environment week:** In November, HEAL hosted a series of events to raise awareness of the links between cancer causation and exposure to toxic chemicals in our everyday environments.

The Cancer and Environment week held in the European capital of Brussels, included a

policy discussion in the European Parliament with guest speaker Sandra Steingraber - scientist, cancer survivor and author of *Living Downstream*, film screenings of Living Downstream to the public and the European Commission's cancer support group, the publication of testimonies from cancer groups across Europe and workshop on pesticides and health. In France, HEAL and Generations Future launched the first environmental prevention of cancer campaign in Europe with an investigation into carcinogens found in a typical child's meal called Toxic Menu.

With upcoming EU discussions on the REACH review, endocrine disruptors and chemical mixtures, Cancer and Environment Week 2010 helped to demonstrate that ambitious policies are needed for better health protection and to highlight the increasing prominence of cancer patient groups on prevention issues.

The full report from Cancer and Environment Week are available on the [HEAL website](#).

~ In November 2010 the European Commission banned the use of organic compound bisphenol A (BPA) in plastic baby bottles, the ban will come into place in March 2011: "It is a small step in the right direction," says Lisette van Vliet, Toxics Policy Advisor at HEAL, "but this only relates to baby bottles. The ban should be for ALL food packaging for infants under three years old - and it should quickly be extended to all food packaging because, if babies during pregnancy are to be protected, exposure of women of child-bearing age should be avoided."

With growing evidence that BPA may play a role in major chronic diseases, such as breast cancer and diabetes, reducing levels of human exposure is a necessary and important step. The exposure of the developing foetus in the womb warrants particular attention because recent studies indicate that BPA can cross the placenta.

The full article and press releases are available on [HEAL's website](#).

CHE Oregon

~ coordinated by Renee Hackenmiller-Paradis, reeneep@oeconline.org

~ Registration is now open for the 3rd Annual NW Environmental Health Conference: Bridging Research, Practice and Policy. The conference will take place on **Friday, February 11, 2011 from 8:30 AM to 4:00 PM** at Portland State University in the Smith Memorial Student Union. This conference will host leading scientists, researchers and healthcare professionals in the field of environmental health with emphasis on the impact the environment has on health and healthcare practices. Register today! <http://www.oeconline.org/nwehc>. For more information, please contact Sara Gerlt Schroeder (971) 409-3381 or nwehc@oeconline.org.

CHE Washington

~ coordinated by Steve Gilbert, sgilbert@innd.org

~ New book released: *Particles on the Wall* (POTW), published by Healthy World Press, will be released on February 13, 2011. POTW is an interdisciplinary book connecting science and art in exploring major themes of today's nuclear age. POTW illuminates key events regarding Washington State's nuclear history, current concerns with radioactive contamination, and the quest for peace. POTW brings together science factoids, poems, visual art, and historical memorabilia to reach out to hearts and minds in the exploration of one of the most significant and challenging developments in human history. POTW seeks to engage scientists and artists in an exploration of the deeper meaning of the nuclear age. More details and additional contributions can be found at www.particlesonthewall.org. Copies of POTW can be requested by contacting Steven Gilbert at sgilbert@innd.org.

Announcements and News Highlights

Reach the Decision Makers 2011 Nationwide Training Program: Reach the Decision Makers (Reach), a project of the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, is an innovative science and policy training program that works to increase the number of scientists, community-based leaders, public health and health care professionals who are actively involved in informing the US Environmental Protection Agency (USEPA) of current and relevant scientific findings impacting their decisions in setting policy. The 2011 class of 18-24 fellows will be open to participants throughout the United States.

Informational conference calls will be held on the following dates and times:

January 24 from 9:00 to 10:30 am PST (Noon to 1:30 EST)

January 31 from 9:00 to 10:30 am PST (Noon to 1:30 EST)

Please join us during one of these times to learn more about Reach the Decision Makers and to have your questions answered. Please RSVP for one of these calls by sending an email to: reach@obgyn.ucsf.edu. If you are interested in applying for the Reach the Decision Makers class of 2011, please complete the application available at <http://prhe.ucsf.edu/prhe/reachdecisionmakers.html> and submit it to reach@obgyn.ucsf.edu. Applications are due February 11, 2011.

January 2011 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online

[Read more](#)

January 2011 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

Toxic Substances: Researchers assess how efficiently mothers transfer 87 environmental contaminants to their developing babies: An international team of researchers has for the first time quantified how effectively mothers pass 87 common environmental contaminants to their children. Their findings provide a way to correlate pollutant concentrations in a mother's blood to levels in her developing baby, which may help regulators pinpoint compounds that are hazardous to unborn and nursing babies.

[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.

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

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