



Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter - June 2010



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Special Announcement

New CHE website feature: Policy Reform webpage

Many members of CHE have expressed strong interest in learning more about specific legislation and policies currently under consideration. For this reason, the information on CHE's new [Chemical Policy Reform webpage](#) will allow people to quickly link to coalitions and organizations working on bills that are relevant to environmental health. We will also highlight conference calls that are open to the public regarding particular environmental health-related legislation.

An American in the European Union: Thoughts on Chemical Policy, Cancer and Climate Change

This past month I spent a week visiting with CHE Partners in London, Brussels and Geneva. We had an especially valuable meeting in Brussels at the office of the [Health and Environment Alliance \(HEAL\)](#), an anchor CHE Partner in the European Union. At that meeting, 25 scientists and policy advocates working on environmental health issues gathered for a half-day of discussions. Below I offer some of my reflections on the current state of chemical policy efforts and related initiatives in the European Union (EU).

Chemical policy

The widely agreed on master narrative in the EU is that a remarkable coalition of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) came together to help pass the [Registration, Evaluation, Authorisation and Restriction of Chemicals policy \(REACH\)](#) by the European Commission. This new set of regulations is seen as a major step forward for precautionary chemical management by many in Europe, the US, and around the world.

Right after REACH passed, most of the NGOs in the coalition cut back on their focus on REACH and moved on to other issues, especially climate change, where they saw both urgent need and stronger funding opportunities. Remaining are just a handful of scientists and policy advocates in Brussels to work on the critical matter of REACH implementation and other environmental health issues. On the other hand, the chemical industry, which

was very distressed that REACH had passed, continued its strong presence in Brussels and its involvement in technical committees in Helsinki, the seat of the Chemicals Agency. The result has been that the chemical industry and its allies have been quite effective in moving some parts of REACH decisively toward their agendas.

In addition to REACH implementation, there are a series of other key environmental health issues on the table in Brussels, including a new Pesticide Regulation, a new Biocides Regulation, and discussions on nanotechnology. One of the critical issues in the Pesticide Regulation will be the definition of endocrine disruptors (EDCs), which is a central science and policy question that will be determined for the EU in both industrial and agricultural chemicals over the next few years. How EDCs are defined and the tests used to identify them are therefore critical in the implementation of REACH.

I think it is important to note in this context that NGO-business-governmental relationships are very different in the EU from what they are in the US. One difference is that the EU's schedule on what issues will be debated and decided is generally known in advance. This means all sides can prepare for these debates and know what issues will be determined. Once an issue is decided, the EU will likely not revisit it for several years, although reviews with five-year deadlines are often mandated in the laws to permit them to be adjusted to scientific and technical progress.

A second difference is that the EU supports many of the key NGOs working on these issues so that they can have a seat at the discussions with business and government. NGOs, like industry associations, are considered legitimate and necessary participants, albeit in some arenas only as non-voting observers. This kind of support from the EU tends to engender a more civil debate than takes place in the US, with less confrontation, and more issues discussed in technical committees where the science is directly addressed.

A third difference is that the philanthropic community is far less developed in the EU, so NGOs tend to be smaller and have fewer alternatives for funding. Plus, support from government institutions in the EU carries a heavy administrative burden in applying and reporting (financially and substantively) for the annual grants. This can be particularly challenging for NGOs working at EU level because they tend to be smaller than many NGOs work at a national level. In addition, the specificities of language and political organization means their work cannot be easily translated and complemented across borders.

Cancer

Work on Cancer in the EU is constrained by the limited authority of the EU institutions on health matters, in contrast to the extensive power for environmental law-making. However, the EU has set ambitious goals to reverse cancer incidence within 10 years by 15 per cent and has recognized in a number of policy documents the importance of environmental factors and primary prevention. The EU has started a new partnership to bring together more collaborative work. While the partnership is starting to work on more classic early detection and will increase the coordination of national and private research funding; the need and opportunities to galvanize primary prevention will likely increase over time. [The President's Cancer Panel report and recommendations](#), recently released in the US, are far more progressive than what the EU has offered to date.

Climate Change

With respect to climate change, the topic of its health impacts and the need for engagement of the health sector in both mitigation and adaptation has been gathering increasing momentum. This is in significant part due to the work of a coalition of environmental and health groups, both in Europe and in North America as well as elsewhere. A wide health coalition was cemented at the Copenhagen talks, and continues to raise awareness of the issues, encourage participation and political engagement, and advocate for a thorough integration of the health considerations in the policies being debated and negotiated globally. In Europe, the groups are conducting the ['Prescription for a Healthy Planet'](#) campaign and are advocating ambitious EU policies on emissions

reductions for the next round of global UNFCCC talks to be held in Cancun in late 2010.

Some additional reflections

Though the EU generally expresses a much stronger interest in protecting its citizens from environmental hazards than is characteristically true in the US, one striking paradox is that you see thousands of young people on the streets smoking cigarettes, a known major health hazard. In addition, a few countries in the EU strongly support using nuclear power and waste incineration—a perspective that is not currently shared in most parts of the US, though nuclear power is being reconsidered in light of concerns about oil, gas and coal. In short, there are clear cultural differences in how environmental hazards (including smoking) are perceived and how prevention or precautionary measures are taken on either side of the Atlantic.

It is also important to note that the financial crisis is having a major impact in the EU, with drastic cutbacks in social services -- which are the pride of the EU -- expected in many EU countries. This will clearly have a powerful impact on the health of EU residents. It also effects environmental health issues directly. For example, the chemical industry in Germany is one of the healthy industries that remain there -- so science-based arguments to curb the German chemical industry get far less traction when the health of the German economy is on the line.

At the same time, the EU Institutions have gone through their five-yearly changeover of appointed and elected officials and representatives. Notably, the European Parliament has become more conservative, and this will have consequences for the upcoming decisions on chemicals and other environmental health issues. Many of the strong achievements and ambitions on chemicals policies (e.g., REACH, Pesticides) were made under the old Commission and the old Parliament. Initial indications from new laws proposed or being voted now is mixed: some new gains have been made, but some areas may be facing a 'standstill'.

This is simply my characterization of the situation as an outsider writing about the EU and does not necessarily reflect the views of our colleagues in the EU or even here the US. The bottom line is that environmental health science and policy is facing strong headwinds in the EU right now from strong industry forces and the financial crisis. Many critical issues on REACH, the Pesticide Regulation, nanotechnology, cancer prevention, climate change and other environmental health issues will be decided over the next few years. For those concerned with environmental health, how these issues are playing out in the EU is extremely important to keep in mind as we face similar challenges on this side of the Atlantic.

Michael Lerner
President, Commonwealth
Vice-Chair, CHE

***Many thanks to Lisette van Vliet at CHE's Brussels Partner HEAL, and Elise Miller, Director of CHE, for greatly improving the first draft of these comments. 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 Partnership call: Nanotechnology: A New Chapter
in Environmental Health Sciences**

Thursday, June 10, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

Over the past decade, nanomaterials have exploded onto the marketplace, ranging in use from teddy bears and tennis rackets to pharmaceuticals and cosmetics. What do we know about these materials and how are we addressing them from a public health standpoint?

The Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment at the University of California, San Francisco recently released a draft version of their report, "A Nanotechnology Policy Framework: Policy Recommendations for Addressing Potential Health Risks from Nanomaterials in California," which makes recommendations about how to face the new challenges to the policy and risk assessment process that nanomaterials present because of their unique properties. The document draws upon lessons we can learn from past chemical policy experiences and other recent nanotechnology reports in making recommendations for California. The final report is due out the second week of June.

[Read the draft report](#)

Please join CHE to explore the recommendations from this report. Presenters on this call will cover what we know about the unique properties of nanomaterials, why we should be concerned, how nanotechnology is being addressed at the policy and public health level, and what the gaps are in our knowledge.

Featured presenters include:

- **Amber Wise, PhD**, Chemist and Postdoctoral Fellow, Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, University of California, San Francisco
- **Jennifer Sass, PhD**, Senior Scientist, Natural Resources Defense Council
- **Carl Cranor, PhD**, Professor of Philosophy, University of California, Riverside

[RSVP for this call](#)

The call will be moderated by Steve Heilig, CHE Director of Public Health and Education. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

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.

* * * * *

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.

Early bird registration ends July 1st. Register now to take advantage of the \$35 registration fee.

[Read more](#), including a complete symposium description and list of speakers

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:

- 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*](#)
- April 19, 2010 - [Evaluating the Impact of Cumulative Stressors on Health](#)
- March 15, 2010 - [A Conversation with Dr. Linda Birnbaum, Director, NIEHS](#)

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

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

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

CHE's [Facebook page](#)

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:

~ Cindy Sage, co-coordinator of the CHE-EMF working group, gave an excellent presentation on the WHO INTERPHONE study to the CHE-WA working group in late May. [Read more](#)

CHE-EMF

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

~ **The final INTERPHONE study was published in the *International Journal of Epidemiology*.** It summarized results of a 13,000 person, 10-year study of cell phone use and brain tumors (glioma). Cell phone use was linked to a 40% increased risk of glioma at ten years and longer use, rising to a 96% increased risk with ipsilateral use; and tumors were significantly related to the side of the head where the cell phone was used most often. Authors caution against a causal interpretation, but some, including lead author Elizabeth Cardis of CREAL (Barcelona, Spain), say that precautionary action is now warranted. Tumor latency normally is 15-30 years, so finding any indication of risk at only ten years is remarkable.

Cindy Sage, of CHE-EMF and co-editor of the *BioInitiative Report* presented the INTERPHONE findings at a meeting of CHE-WA on May 26, 2010 in Seattle.

[View Cindy's PowerPoint presentation](#)

An editorial perspective on the findings, with recommendations for "next steps" is also posted on [CHE's website](#), along with a play-by-play of the media coverage. In the end, most media coverage termed the INTERPHONE cell phone/brain tumor study inconclusive.

The BioInitiative Working Group issued a press release summarizing the main findings of the INTERPHONE study. That document is available on the CHE website.

The Group also sent a letter to FDA Director, Margaret Hamburg, calling for a review of the FDA's May 17th headline on its consumer information page regarding the new INTERPHONE study results. The FDA's new headline reads:

"No Evidence Linking Cell Phone Use to Risk of Brain Tumors".

The letter strongly disagrees with FDA's dismissal of cell phone risks as unwarranted and counter to the evidence within the INTERPHONE study, its two appendices, and with opinions from the principal author, Dr. Elizabeth Cardis of CREAL (and formerly of IARC).

~ **Several new papers** are just published by the Swedish Orebro University Hospital team of Lennart Hardell, MD, Kjell Hansson Mild, PhD and Fredrik Soderqvist, PhD. Including: "[Radiofrequency fields, trasthyretin, and Alzheimer's disease](#)", *J Alzheimers Dis.* 2010: 20 (2): 599-606.

~ **Journal of the National Cancer Institute** (May 19, 2010) included brief letters from Lennart Hardell, MD, Michael Carlberg, Fredrik Soderqvist, PhD, and Kjell Hansson Mild, PhD, titled: "[Time Trends in Brain Tumor Incidence Rates in Denmark, Finland, Norway and Sweden, 1974-2003](#)".

~ **A new article by Hardell and Colleagues** is also due out June 15, 2010 in [Neuroepidemiology](#) titled: "Mobile Phone Uses and the Risk for Malignant Brain Tumors: A Case-Control Study on Deceased Cases and Controls".

CHE-Fertility

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

~ **An MP3 recording of the May 25 call, [Elevating the Issue: the Emerging CDC National Action Plan on Infertility](#), is now available.** This call highlighted the emerging Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) National Action Plan on the Prevention, Detection and Management of Infertility. Speakers on this call covered the background and impetus for this national action plan, what is currently happening among the working groups, and what the opportunities are for involvement by CHE colleagues in this important endeavor.

The action plan began as a [white paper](#) drafted by an agency-wide ad hoc working group in 2007 and published in 2008. Subsequently, the group hosted a Symposium on Infertility as a Public Health Issue at the CDC in Atlanta in September 2008 and received stakeholder comment through November 2009 to produce in December 2009 an "[Outline for a National Action Plan for the Prevention, Detection and Management of Infertility](#)". There are several working groups that are forming within this framework, including the Environmental and Occupational Exposures Working Group, Surveillance Working Group, Research Working Group, Policy Working Group, Infectious Disease Working Group, Male Infertility Working Group, and Fertility Preservation Working Group. For more information and/or to join any of these working groups, please email Nina Larsen at ncl5@cdc.gov or nlarsen@cdc.gov. You can also reach her by phone at 770-488-5172.

You can also download the [CDC's report to Congress](#) about this effort. As mentioned on the call, if you are interested in making sure the appropriate funding is secured for the national action plan, please contact Barb Collura, the Executive Director of Resolve, at bcollura@resolve.org, who is working on this issue.

~ **The "Girl, Disrupted" report is now available in German: [Gestörte Weiblichkeit](#)**, produced by Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF). As a reminder, "Girl,

"Disrupted" is a report on the Women's Reproductive Health and the Environment Workshop held in January 2008; specifically, the report is a lay summary of how endocrine (or hormone) disruptors impact female reproductive health at different stages of life.

[Download the report in German](#)

~ **Newly Updated CHE-Fertility Online Abstracts Library**

CHE-Fertility is pleased to announce the availability of the newly updated CHE-Fertility Online Abstracts Library, a representative collection of the peer-reviewed scientific literature related to fertility, reproductive health, and the environment. The library includes nontechnical summaries of scientific studies that link environmental exposures to infertility/reduced fertility in addition to other reproductive health problems such as preterm birth, hypospadias, endometriosis, low sperm count, premature ovarian failure, prostate cancer, and others.

[Visit the Abstracts Library](#)

** We are currently seeking beta testers. If you are willing to test the library and provide us with feedback about how useful and searchable it is, please julia@healthandenvironment.org with your input. We greatly value your insights. After all, the library is intended to serve the diverse CHE-Fertility community in all of its various efforts to protect public health from environmental exposures.

CHE-LDDI

~ coordinated by Erika Hagensen, ehagensen@healthandenvironment.org and Elise Miller, CHE Director, elise@healthandenvironment.org

~ **[Autism Society of America Meeting July 7-10, 2010](#)**: The Autism Society (ASA) will have its 41st annual national meeting at the Hyatt Regency in Dallas, Texas. LDDI's "Mind, Disrupted" biomonitoring report will be featured as will other environmental contributors to disabilities. Please stay tuned in for more information on this important meeting or contact Donna Ferullo from ASA: dferullo@autism-society.org.

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE Alaska

~ coordinated by Pam Miller, pkmiller@akaction.net

~ **New teleconference**: The New Science of How Herbicides Affect Health and the Environment--Dispelling the Myth of "The Dose Makes the Poison": A Case Study of Glyphosate and the Alaska Railroad

Wednesday, June 30, 2010 at 9 AM Alaska time / 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern

New scientific evidence from the fields of toxicology, endocrinology, developmental biology, and biochemistry shows that a core assumption of toxicology, "the dose makes the poison," is inadequate as a basis for regulatory standards to protect human health. Evidence shows that pesticides have interactive effects and adverse health effects at extremely low levels-below EPA allowable levels. These effects include adverse neurological, endocrine, immune, reproductive and developmental health outcomes.

Over the past three decades, citizens of Alaska have consistently voiced strong opposition to the use of herbicides by the Alaska Railroad and have successfully prevented the Railroad from applying herbicides since 1982. Alaskans have particular concern about the use of herbicides along the rail belt because of the many streams, wetlands, rivers, and groundwater sources of drinking water. In addition, many people harvest wild plants, wildlife, and fish along the rail belt. This year, however, the Alaska Department of Environmental Conservation granted the Alaska Railroad a permit allowing them to spray the harmful pesticide glyphosate, as well as additional solvents and surfactants that make the herbicide more persistent and toxic. Join us for a

discussion of the current science of low-dose effects of glyphosate, the status of the EPA's review of glyphosate, and why communities throughout Alaska oppose herbicide use along the railroad. We will explore what policy changes are necessary to protect public health.

Featured presenters include

(additional information on these presenters are available at: http://www.healthandenvironment.org/wg_calls/7626):

- **Dr. Warren Porter, PhD** has been Professor of Zoology and Environmental Toxicology at the University of Wisconsin at Madison since 1986. Dr. Porter's work has been published widely in peer reviewed scientific journals, including Environmental Health Perspectives and Toxicology and Industrial Health.
- **Jay Feldman** (invited) Executive Director of Beyond Pesticides, has a 30 year history of working with communities nationwide on toxics policies and safe management strategies that avoid reliance on toxic chemicals.
- **Nichelle Harriot** is a Research Associate with Beyond Pesticides. With a BS in Chemistry and Environmental Science and an MS in Environmental Science and Policy, Nichelle joined Beyond Pesticides as an intern in the summer of 2007, having previously worked with several conservation and public health issues, and then joined the staff as a research associate.
- **Marc Lamoreaux** (invited) is the Land and Environment Director for the Native Village of Eklutna (NVE), a sovereign Dena'ina Native Tribe and the last of eight aboriginal villages in the Anchorage area.

For more information or to join this free call and receive dial-up instructions, please RSVP to Alaska Community Action on Toxics at 907-222-7714 or diana@akaction.org

CHE Washington

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

~ The Washington State Chapter of the national Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE-WA) held a well attended meeting on May 26, 2010 at Antioch University. The featured speaker was Cindy Sage, coordinator of the national CHE [working group on electromagnetic fields](#). She gave an excellent presentation evaluating The World Health Organization's just-released INTERPHONE study.

[View Cindy Page's PowerPoint](#)

The INTERPHONE study, coordinated by WHO's International Agency for Research on Cancer, is a series of studies on cell phone usage and brain tumors in humans. Begun in 2000 and conducted in 13 countries (not the US), it was finally released May 18, 2010. Typical media responses ranged from "Heavy mobile users risk cancer," to "No proof of mobile phone cancer link".

Cindy helped us sort through the media hype, understand the science in the study and encouraged us to answer questions: What is the right response by our government and our health agencies? What should we do next? What precautions can we take? If you have a cell or cordless phone, a wireless laptop or wireless routers, WI-FI at work/school/office, or the new PDAs including BlackBerry, Treo and iPhone units these subjects are worthy of consideration.

The talk was followed by regional environmental health updates covering several specific topics: 2010 Washington Legislative Update: Bisphenol-A and beyond - Anna Davis; CHE-WA Children's Environmental Health working group update - Gail Gensler; American Lung Association of Washington - Aileen Gagny ; and CHE national's report, "[Mind, Disrupted](#)" on biomonitoring and learning/developmental disabilities - Elise Miller. We

ended with announcements and consideration of topics for the fall meeting.

For more information contact: CHE-WA Coordinator Aimee Boulanger, aboulanger@whidbey.com, or CHE-WA host Steve Gilbert, sgilbert@innd.org

Announcements and News Highlights

EPA Indoor Air Quality Tools for Schools Awards Program

The application process for EPA's competitive IAQ Tools for Schools awards is now open. Be recognized for outstanding commitment to improving children's health by promoting healthy indoor air quality.

[Read more](#)

Join the National Conversation on on public health and chemical exposures

Partners in the National Conversation are now offering a way for the public to join the conversation about better ways to protect the public from harmful chemical exposures by using the Community Conversation Toolkit to host a community conversation. Mini grants for hosting a community conversation are available. Host a conversation before June 30, 2010 to be included as part of the National Conversation work groups and the Leadership Council's report and action agenda.

[Learn more](#)

New York Times publishes the Lymphoma Foundation's letter regarding cancer and the environment

[Read the Foundation's letter to the editor](#)

June 2010 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online

[Read more](#)

June 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

New CHE resource on chemical policy reform

CHE has created a new webpage with information on upcoming teleconferences, legislation and analysis; the initial focus will be on the "Safe Chemicals Act of 2010."

[Visit the webpage](#)

New report on human health and climate change

Environmental Health Perspectives and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has published "A Human Health Perspective on Climate Change: A Report Outlining the Research Needs on the Human Health Effects of Climate Change".

[Read the report](#)

New report on the health risks of secret chemicals in fragrance

The majority of chemicals found in this report have never been assessed for safety by any publicly accountable agency, or by the cosmetics industry's self-policing review panels. Campaign for Safe Cosmetics.

[Download the report](#)

Ten-year INTERPHONE cell study released

The Institute for Health and the Environment, University at Albany, Rensselaer, New York, has released the INTERPHONE Study.

[Read more](#)

New report, "No Silver Lining: An Investigation into Bisphenol-A in Canned Foods"

This report provides new data about the amount of BPA that could be consumed from eating canned food and drinks available in the U.S. and Canada. For "No Silver Lining", the food and beverage contents of 50 cans collected from 19 U.S. states and Ontario, Canada were tested. The report reveals that BPA is a routine contaminant in canned foods.

[Link to the report](#)

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

Julia Varshavsky, Program Associate

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