



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter - September 2010



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## **Obesity and Related Health Conditions: A Call for Primary Prevention Strategies**

This month is the first-ever National Childhood Obesity Awareness Month. The fact we even have to raise awareness on this debilitating condition is a sad reflection on the current health of our society, particularly our children's. Even sadder yet is the fact that obesity is associated with a number of other diseases on the rise in younger and younger populations, including diabetes and metabolic syndrome. Nonetheless, children are being sent off for the new school year to try to learn, while continuing to eat foods infused with trans-fats, pesticides and agricultural antibiotics, to imbibe drinks from cans lined with BPA plastic (an endocrine disrupting chemical and likely obesogen - see [CHE's letter to First Lady Michelle Obama](#)), and to sit for hours without adequate recess in classrooms known to have poor ventilation and mold. Not a pretty picture, I know. But I have a 5-year-old starting kindergarten at a public school this week, and believe me, all of these issues are very much on my mind. No doubt many of you as well as countless other parents, grandparents, aunts, uncles and anyone who cares about children's health and society's future share these concerns.

Fortunately, a number of innovative thinkers and colleagues in different fields are trying to press for systemic ways to reduce the alarming increase in chronic diseases and disabilities and the resulting escalation in health care costs. Below I list a few events being held this month that are intended to highlight primary prevention and some promising public health interventions. Also feel free to check our [on-line calendar](#) for other webinars, conferences and workshops you may find of interest.

1) The American Medical Association, in partnership with Kaiser Permanente and Health Care Without Harm, are hosting a free webinar on Thursday, September 9 at 5:00 p.m. Eastern on "Healthy Food in Healthcare: The Role for Healthcare in Food and Agriculture Policy". To register: [http://noharm.org/us\\_canada/events/webinars/food2010-09-09.php](http://noharm.org/us_canada/events/webinars/food2010-09-09.php)

2) Healthy Food Action <http://www.healthyfoodaction.org/>, a new national effort launched the Institute for Agriculture and Trade Policy, the Keep Antibiotics Working coalition and the Infectious Disease Society of America, is hosting its first webinar in a new series entitled "Superbugs, Super Problems: Agricultural Antibiotics and Emerging Infections" to

be held Thursday, September 16. For more information, see:

<http://www.iatp.org/healthyfoodbill/index.php?q=healthy-food-healthy-farms-webinar-series>

3) CHE is hosting a national partnership call, "Pediatric Integrative Health: Approaches to Optimizing 'Whole Child' Wellness", on Tuesday, September 21 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern ([http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership\\_calls/7910](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership_calls/7910)). The speakers on this call will discuss the latest on children's integrative health and emerging science regarding specific approaches to creating optimal environments for children to develop. Please note that these speakers will also be presenting at upcoming symposium, "Children First: Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child", to be held October 1, 2010 at the University of California, San Francisco. For more information, please see: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/news/conference>

Finally, I wanted to mention that we have decided to change the name of our current working group "CHE Metabolic Syndrome" to "CHE Obesity". The reason is two-fold: a) emerging research suggests that some common biological mechanisms and triggers are associated with symptoms of obesity, diabetes and metabolic syndrome; and b) obesity has become one of the most recognized health concerns in society today. We intend this new framing to encourage more robust consideration of environmental health science that is beginning to show that some of the same environmental factors may contribute to different health endpoints depending on a range of other influences. We also hope this new framing will increase the flow of information sharing and appropriate action to more effectively address these three different, but related health conditions. If you are already a member of the "CHE Metabolic Syndrome" working group, you will automatically be switched to "CHE Obesity". If you wish to join the CHE Obesity working group, please send an e-mail request to: [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org).

May our collective work this fall spawn significant and lasting improvement in human and ecological health.

With warm regards,

Elise

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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:**

**Pediatric Integrative Health: Approaches to Optimizing "Whole Child" Wellness**

**Tuesday, September 21 at 11 AM PST / 2 PM EST**

[RSVP for this call](#)

Children's integrative health is a holistic approach to wellness that examines the context-the ecology-in which optimal health and wellness can be achieved. Increasingly, parents, nurses, pediatricians and others in the other healthcare sector are trying to navigate the field of environmental health to determine what conditions might best promote healthy child development.

Join CHE and three leaders in the pediatric integrative health field to learn about the

latest in "ecological" medicine and emerging science regarding specific approaches to creating optimal environments for children to develop. Please note that these speakers will also be presenting at upcoming symposium, "Children First: Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child", to be held October 1, 2010 in San Francisco. For more information, please see: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/news/conference>

**Featured speakers will include:**

- **Lawrence Rosen, MD**, Founder, Whole Child Center
- **David Becker, MD, MPH**, Assistant Clinical Professor of Pediatrics, University of California-San Francisco
- **Tieraona Low Dog, MD**, Director, Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine

The call will be moderated by Elise Miller, CHE Director. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

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**CHE Cafe call:**

**Living Downstream: A Conversation with Sandra Steingraber and Chanda Chevannes**

**Tuesday, October 12, 2010 at 1 PM PST / 4 PM EST**

[RSVP for this call](#)

The recently released documentary *Living Downstream* explores the impact of environmental toxins on human health. This feature-length film focuses on the work of Dr. Sandra Steingraber, ecologist, author and cancer survivor. Based on Dr. Steingraber's 1997 book of the same name, *Living Downstream* follows Sandra over the course of one pivotal year as she works to break the silence about cancer and its environmental links, and as she finds herself in a period of medical uncertainty about whether her cancer has recurred. Join CHE for this conversation with Dr. Steingraber and the film's producer and director, Chanda Chevannes.

The call will be moderated by Elise Miller, MEd, CHE Director. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

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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**

*The Children First: Promoting Ecological Health for the Whole Child* symposium on October 1, 2010, at the Mission Bay Conference Center in San Francisco will feature presentations by leading experts in the field of children's integrative health: Richard Louv, author of "Last Child in the Woods"; Lawrence Rosen, MD, founder of the Whole Child Center; Richard Jackson, MD, MPH, professor and chair of Environmental Health Sciences at the UCLA School of Public Health; Tieraona Low Dog, MD, director of fellowship at the Arizona Center for Integrative Medicine; Barbara Sattler, RN, DrPH, professor and director of the Environmental Health Education Center, University of Maryland School of Nursing; Fritjof Capra, PhD, founding director of the Center for Ecoliteracy and many other influential leaders in this growing and complex field.

Throughout this all-day event, presenters will highlight a range of interacting factors that influence child health and development, including nutrition, education, socioeconomic status, exposures to toxics and access to health care. This promises to be a full day of valuable information promoting model programs and concrete steps toward creating optimal and sustainable environments in which children can thrive. Materials and audio recordings will be archived on our website.

Seating is limited and filling quickly. Registration is only \$50 and includes a continental breakfast and lunch. Presenter books will be available for sale and signing during the lunch break. A full agenda, speaker list and registration link is available on [CHE's website](#). For more information, contact Erika Sanders, CHE administrative coordinator, at [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org).

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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:

- August 121, 2010 - [On the Ground in the Gulf Coast: A Conversation with Wilma Subra and Michael Lerner](#)
- 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"](#)

Podcasts: CHE also podcasts Partnership and working group call recordings. Subscribe to the podcast at:

<http://www.healthandenvironment.org/Calls.xml>

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

## CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

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

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

Visit 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)

~ **MP3 recording now available:** *Wireless SmartMeters: What are the health, personal safety, wireless security and excessive billing issues all about and what can consumers do now?*

[Listen to the recording](#)

~ **Smart Meters:** Nancy Evans has been following an excellent article on smart meter vulnerabilities: "Who Controls the Off Switch" by Ross Anderson, Computer Laboratory, Cambridge University, England ([Ross.Anderson@cl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Ross.Anderson@cl.cam.ac.uk)) and Shailendra Fuloria, Computer Laboratory, Cambridge University, England ([Shailendra.Fuloria@cl.cam.ac.uk](mailto:Shailendra.Fuloria@cl.cam.ac.uk)). The paper will be presented in October at a National Institute of Science and Technology (NIST) conference (details to follow).

[Read the article](#)

From the Abstract:

Abstract - *We're about to acquire a significant new cybervulnerability. The world's energy utilities are starting to install hundreds of millions of 'smart meters' which contain a remote off switch. Its main purpose is to ensure that customers who default on their payments can be switched remotely to a prepay tariff; secondary purposes include supporting interruptible tariffs and implementing rolling power cuts at times of supply shortage. The off switch creates information security problems of a kind, and on a scale, that the energy companies have not had to face before. From the viewpoint of*

*a cyber attacker - whether a hostile government agency, a terrorist organisation or even a militant environmental group - the ideal attack on a target country is to interrupt its citizens' electricity supply. This is the cyber equivalent of a nuclear strike; when electricity stops, then pretty soon everything else does too. Until now, the only plausible ways to do that involved attacks on critical generation, transmission and distribution assets, which are increasingly well defended.*

~ **New article on cell phones:** Sascha de Gersdorff, Senior Editor for *Women's Health* magazine is producing an in-depth article on cell phones, cordless phones, WI-FI and other wireless technology issues for an upcoming issue. She has interviewed a number of experts in science, public health and policy so we are looking forward to this article. CHE-EMF will post the link, when Sascha's article is published.

~ **Recommended reading:** A thoughtful, well-balanced article, "Are Cell Phones Safe? The Verdict is Still Out", on the cell phone-brain tumor issue appeared in the August issue of Yale University magazine *Environment 360*. Written by Bruce Stutz, the article helps explain the great divisions in interpretation of the WHO Interphone final study results.

[Read the full article](#)

~ **New paper published:** *Effects of GSM Signals During Exposure to Event Related Potentials (ERPs)*

Marek BK, Adam Dudarewicz, Marek Zmy Lony, and Mariola Liwinska-Kowalska, Nofer Institute of Occupational Medicine, Lodz, Poland

*Abstract: The primary aim of this work was to assess the effect of electromagnetic field (EMF) from the GSM mobile phone system on human brain function. The assessment was based on the assay of event related potentials (ERPs). Conclusions: The results suggest that exposure to GSM EMF exerts some effects on CNS, including effects on long latency ERPs.*

*International Journal of Occupational Medicine and Environmental Health (2010) 23(2):191-199. DOI 10.2478/v10001-010-0021-8).*

## **CHE-Fertility**

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

### ~ **CHE Fertility and Reproductive Health Working Group - Transition**

**Announcement:** As some of you may know, Julia Varshavsky, CHE Fertility and Reproductive Health's national coordinator, is starting a graduate program in environmental health sciences and public health at UC Berkeley this fall. Julia has decided to also pursue a research apprenticeship with Professor and CHE Partner, Rachel Morello-Frosch, which means that she will be transitioning from her position at CHE-Fertility over the next month into full time graduate work and research. Given the significant contributions and leadership Julia brought to CHE Fertility over the last several years, we are truly sad that she will be moving on from this position. At the same time, we are of course very supportive of her taking these next steps to expand her professional career.

Also note that we expect the new national coordinator to be determined by the end of September and intend to make this transition as smooth as possible for all CHE Fertility participants. We will continue to provide services to the group during this time. Please stay tuned for a call on environmental contributors to changes in the timing of puberty

onset, among other fertility/reproductive health topics. If you have any questions or concerns, please feel free to contact Julia at her current e-mail: [julia@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:julia@healthandenvironment.org), or Elise Miller, Director of CHE, at: [elise@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org).

## 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)

~ The next meeting of the **Mental Health Working Group** will take place on **September 24, 2010 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern**. If you are not a participant in this working group, but would like to participate in this conversation, please contact [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org).

~ **Join CHE Autism:** CHE-LDDI partners are invited to participate in the CHE Autism working group. Similar to the way the CHE Cancer and the CHE Breast Cancer working groups are closely related, the same is true for CHE Autism and LDDI. We invite you to participate in both listservs. To join CHE Autism, send a request to [info@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:info@healthandenvironment.org).

~ **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)

~ **Evidence of huge boost to public health from stronger climate policy:** Brussels, 6 September 2010 - A report to be launched next Tuesday, 14 September 2010 analyses the health benefits for Europeans of stronger EU action on climate change, and reframes the current discussions from climate costs to climate benefits, particularly for people's health and healthcare systems. (1)

Published by Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Health Care Without Harm Europe (HCWH E), it quantifies some of the very substantial health and economic benefits of moving to a 30% target on reductions in greenhouse gas emissions.

The report provides figures on overall public health benefits in the European Union from a tightening on climate change policy and the first-ever figures on health benefits for individual EU Member States of the 30% target.

The report also demonstrates that the sooner the European Union moves to the higher target, the better for health, health care budgets and productivity.

"This report makes the case and provides new evidence for EU and Member State politicians and policy makers to support the move to a 30% domestic target on greenhouse gas emissions," says Dr Pendo Maro, Senior Climate and Energy Advisor, Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) and Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL).

The report will be available at [www.env-health.org/r/93](http://www.env-health.org/r/93) and [www.noharm.org/europe/issues/climate/](http://www.noharm.org/europe/issues/climate/) from 01.01 (00.01 GMT) on Tuesday 14 September 2010. A press release will be issued earlier under embargo. Please contact Diana Smith, Communications, Health and Environment Alliance, [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org) if you wish to receive a copy.

## ~ **New developments in WHO European Environment and Health process:**

Following the successful WHO Europe Parma Ministerial conference in March earlier this year, health ministers will gather at the WHO Regional Assembly for Europe Committee in Moscow from 13-16 September, where one item of discussion will be the future of environment and health in Europe.

A new high-level European Environment and Health Ministerial Board (EHMB) will be created, and four health ministers from among the 53 countries of the WHO European Region will be elected to the board. WHO country representatives will also discuss the environment and health achievements and plans for ensuring the Parma Declaration and Commitment for Action documents are translated into WHO's work plan, strategy and resources over the coming years.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) and Eco Forum will be attending as civil society observers, and discussing with country health representatives how addressing environment and health links makes economic and health sense. We will be providing a statement on the future of the environment and health process and the challenges and immense benefits to the health sector by taking this forward. From the beginning, NGOs played an essential role in ensuring the success of the process towards healthier environments. Full recognition of this crucial voice of the public in the new decision-making structures needs to be ensured. The HEAL and Eco Forum statement will be available on the HEAL website on September 14th [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org).

## CHE Oregon

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

### ~ Growing Green Chemistry in Oregon

Wednesday, October 13, 7:30 - 9:30 AM  
University of Oregon White Stag Building  
70 NW Couch Street, Portland, OR 97209

Green chemistry is an emerging field that helps make products "benign by design", preventing pollution by reducing it at the source. Its use leads to innovations that make products safer for people and the environment-and will increase the competitiveness of Oregon companies. Pioneering companies in the state are already demonstrating how green chemistry can increase profitability and reduce costs while maintaining performance.

[Join the Oregon Environmental Council](#)

## Announcements and News Highlights

**NIH launches study on health effects from Gulf oil spill:** The National Institutes of Health will launch a multi-year study this fall to look at the potential health effects from the oil spill in the Gulf region. The Gulf Worker Study, announced by NIH Director Francis S. Collins, M.D., Ph.D., in June, is in response to the largest oil spill in U.S. history, caused by the explosion of the Deepwater Horizon offshore drilling oil rig in the Gulf of Mexico. Dr. Collins pledged \$10 million in NIH funding for the study's initial phases.

[Read the press release](#)

**Physicians for Social Responsibility announces new Environmental Health Policy Institute:** Today PSR introduces its new [Environmental Health Policy Institute](#), an online forum of medical and public health experts. Delve into this virtual think tank to learn what public health experts think about the most critical environmental issues of our time -- and to build your advocacy skills. This month, read how Laura Anderko, Devra Davis, Steven G. Gilbert, Maye Thompson, and Kristen Welker-Hood respond to the question: *What is the key obstacle to implementing an effective, health-protective chemicals management system?*

**IOM Committee on Breast Cancer and the Environment: The Scientific Evidence, Research Methodology, and Future Directions** was convened in response to a request from Susan G. Komen for the Cure® to review and assess the strength of the science base regarding the relationship between breast cancer and the environment. The third meeting of this committee will be held on Wednesday and Thursday, September 15-16, 2010, in Room 105 of the Keck Center, 500 Fifth Street, NW, Washington DC. The portion of the meeting open to the public will be held on Wednesday, September 15, beginning at 2:15p.m. To review the draft agenda for the public session and to register to attend, please visit <http://www.iom.edu/BreastCancerEnvironment.aspx>.

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

[Read more](#)

### September 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

**National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures accepting public comment:** Through September 20th, National Conversation on Public Health and Chemical Exposures draft work group reports are available for public comment at [www.resolv.org/nationalconversation](http://www.resolv.org/nationalconversation). Six work group reports are posted, one on each of the following cross-cutting public health and chemical exposures topics: chemical emergencies, education and communication, monitoring, policies and practices, scientific understanding and serving communities.

[The National Conversation](#) is a collaborative initiative supported by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention and the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry through which many organizations and individuals are helping develop an action agenda for strengthening the nation's approach to protecting the public's health from harmful chemical exposures. RESOLVE, a non-profit independent consensus-building organization is facilitating the National Conversation process.

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

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