



Collaborative on Health and the Environment

eNewsletter -- March 2009



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Dear CHE Partners:

In this digital age, it has become fashionable to criticize the "mainstream media" as outdated, out of touch, even irrelevant. And many newspapers, magazines, and television journalists are indeed seeing their very survival threatened. But while it is true that increasing numbers of us spend increasing hours on our computers, the journalists and publications that have long been considered reputable and widely-read soldier on, and when they feature an emerging trend or topic, it is "news" in more ways than one. For a very recent example, consider this relatively brief posting by David Biello from, yes, the "blog" section of Scientific American titled "Are Some Chemicals More Dangerous at Low Doses?". In accessible form, it encapsulates key points that CHE partners have been working on for years, and quotes new NIEHS director Linda Birnbaum and founding CHE partner Sandra Steingraber. Appearing in Scientific American, this seems significant, as one of CHE's goals is to "mainstream" the emerging science into greater visibility, both professional and public.

From my computer, this article was gleaned from Environmental Health News, the now-essential service which we have been telling people about for years now. EHN not only collects relevant publications from around the globe, but now offers its own expert reporting, such as this striking report from Marla Cone about autism - concerning a report which might tell us more than the longstanding controversy about vaccines. And, to select just one more recent item, Heather Hamlin PhD synthesizes new research on pesticides and brain cancers here.

There's much more to EHN, of course - if you are not a subscriber, take a look here: Environmental Health News. Much of what you might find on the internet is extraneous at best, of course, but EHN is one of those rare resources that can make one wonder how you ever got along without it.

We hope that some of the other CHE-related offerings below will also be of such interest and worth to you, starting with what promises to be a fascinating partner call on May 7 about one of the more important and troubling health trends of our time.

Best,

Steve Heilig, MPH

Director of Public Health and Education at San Francisco Medical Society and CHE

CHE Partnership Calls

Metabolic Syndrome: At the Crossroads of the Western Disease Cluster

Thursday, May 7 at 10 AM Pacific/ 1 PM Eastern

Join CHE on **May 7, 2009 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern** for an important call on metabolic syndrome, a cluster of conditions occurring together that elevate a person's risk of developing certain chronic diseases such heart disease, stroke and diabetes and its intersection with what is being called the Western Disease Cluster. On this call we will explore how metabolic syndrome is a red flag for the state of public health, how it is connected to environmental factors and what opportunities it presents for preventative interventions beyond medicine, such as public health policies, community planning and food systems.

[RSVP for This Call](#)

Speakers:

- **David Jacobs**, Ph.D., Professor of Public Health, University of Minnesota
- **Ted Schettler**, MD, MPH, Science Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network and CHE
- **Jill Stein**, Ph.D, MD, co-founder of the Massachusetts Coalition for Healthy Communities and board member of Greater Boston Physicians for Social Responsibility.

Additional Resources:

Environmental Threats to Healthy Aging Report: With a Closer Look at Alzheimer's and Parkinson's Diseases: <http://www.agehealthy.org>

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

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:

- Apr 6, 2009 - "[Battle Scars: Findings from the Federal Report on Gulf War Veterans Illness](#)"
- Mar 26, 2009 - "[Integrative Medicine: The State of the Science and Its Interface with Environmental Health: A Conversation with Dean Ornish, MD](#)"
- Feb 24, 2009 - "[Girl, Disrupted: Hormone Disruptors and Women's Reproductive Health](#)"
- Jan 8, 2009 - "[Environmental and Health Costs \(and Benefits?\) of the Economic Recession: A Conversation with Lester Brown](#)"

And of course, you can always explore our [archived resources](#) from past Partnership calls.

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

CHE LDDI

~ coordinated by Elise Miller, CHE Director

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~ **Next LDDI Working Group call:** LDDI's next call is scheduled for **Thursday, April 30, at 2:00 p.m. Eastern**. The focus of this call will be enhancing LDDI-related communications, messaging, web site and related materials. Staff from the Raben Group, which is being hired to work with LDDI this year on communications and outreach, will participate on the call. Also, the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities' (AAIDD's) report from their conference in December 2008, including recommendations for communications and advocacy, will be available by the time of the call for review and discussion. Information for the call will be circulated on the LDDI listserv closer to the time. Contact: Elise Miller at elise@healthandenvironment.org

~ **New LDDI Co-Coordinator:** Laura Abulafia will start serving as LDDI's national co-coordinator half-time starting April 20th while continuing to serve as director of AAIDD's Environmental Health Initiative half-time. Elise Miller will still be very active in LDDI, but Laura's leadership will be essential in effectively accomplishing LDDI's goals for this year and beyond. Laura and Elise are still in the process of refining how they will divide up responsibilities and roles.

~ **Mental Health and Environment Working Group:** This new working group, a subcommittee of LDDI, will hold its next call on **Friday, April 17 at 1:00p.m. Eastern time**. The group is chaired by the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD). The working groups goals include: a) educating and engaging the mental health community in regards to environmental exposures that may impact mental health and result in psychiatric symptoms, b) developing materials for health professionals and patients regarding how to reduce environmental exposures that may contribute to neurological or behavioral problems, and c) encouraging the mental health community to support chemical policy reform and other efforts to improve environmental health. Contact: Ed Seliger at eseliger@thenadd.org

~ **Environmental Health Perspectives:** LDDI member, Barbara McElgunn, with LDA-Canada, makes the case for the precautionary principle in policy making in this is an insightful and very timely article, "Understanding the Role of Science in Regulation" in the current issue of Environmental Health Perspectives.
<http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2009/117-3/focus-abs.html>

~ **LDDI biomonitoring project:** The planning group for the LDDI biomonitoring project has starting to move forward with confirmed participants on testing for specified chemicals. For more information, please contact Sharyle Patton at spatton@iqc.org

CHE HEAL (Health and Environment Alliance, Belgium)

~ coordinated by Hana Kuncova
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~ **HEAL call for action on pesticides-free public places:** During the internationally known, Week Without Pesticides (20-30 March), the Health & Environment Alliance ([HEAL](#)) and the Mouvement pour les Droits et le Respect des Générations Futures ([MDRGF](#)) launched a [postcard action](#) urging municipalities in France to phase out the use of pesticides in parks, school and sports grounds. At the same time, HEAL released the [results of a poll](#) revealing that half the UK population is concerned about pesticides, not only on their food but also in public places. This compares with a similar poll in France where 80% favoured pesticide-free public spaces. Both actions are part of HEAL's '[Sick of pesticides](#)' campaign. It aims at encouraging governments across Europe to eliminate avoidable cancer risks by bringing bans on spraying in public areas and phasing out the most hazardous substances as soon as possible.

~ **HEAL helps European consumers to learn about harmful chemicals in everyday products:** On Friday 13th March 2009, the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) together with partners ([Chemicals Health Monitor - partners](#)) celebrated the European consumer day* by launching new materials and website for the public on the new consumer's right to know about harmful chemicals in products as established by the [REACH**](#) chemicals law. Entitled "Harmful chemicals in the products you buy? Your right to know", the leaflet explains how the new 'right to know' works, and how consumers can use it. It includes a sample letter to a manufacturer or retailer to obtain information on whether harmful chemicals are present in the product. It should take consumers not more

than five minutes to prepare. The leaflet also gives examples of chemicals of high concern that are typically found in different consumer products.

[Download the leaflet](#)

CHE ALASKA

~ coordinated by Pamela Miller, Director of the Alaska Community on Toxics
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~ **Statewide Teleconference Seminar Series:** Health care professionals, researchers, tribal representatives, health and environmental advocates, students, health-affected persons, parents, and anyone who is interested is cordially invited to participate in the teleconference seminar on:

From Silent Spring to Silent Night: How Chemicals Affect Reproductive Health

Please join us for a conversation with Tyrone Hayes, Ph.D., Professor of Integrative Biology at the University of California, Berkeley.

Time: **Wednesday, April 15, 2009 at 9AM Alaska time/10AM Pacific**
The call will last one hour.

CALL-IN INFORMATION:

To join this free call and receive the dial-up instructions, please RSVP to Alaska Community Action on Toxics at colleen@akaction.org or (907) 222-7714. (Please note e-mail address change.)

CHE EMF

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

~ International scientists and policy makers continue to urge a precautionary approach on the exponential expansion of wireless devices and technologies. In the U.S., however, inaction, indifference, and/or denial prevail. Meanwhile, the wireless industry enjoys unprecedented expansion. As one financial analyst wrote recently:

While the Stimulus Package passed by Congress contained \$7 billion for broadband infrastructure, AT&T and Verizon each plan to spend \$15-18 billion this year on capital investments. It is conceivable that these two companies alone could invest in one year almost five times what the federal broadband stimulus will spend over the next two years.

~ On **April 2**, the European Parliament passed a new resolution calling for caution on the use and expansion of electromagnetic fields, particularly radiofrequency exposure from wireless technologies. The resolution was endorsed by an overwhelming margin of 559 members in favor, 22 opposed, and 8 abstaining.

[View the resolution](#)

~ Writing in [Surgical Neurology](#), Australian, Austrian and Swedish researchers reported that more than 10 years of cell phone use doubled the risk of a brain tumor on the side of the head where the phone was held. This new meta-analysis considered 11 long-term peer-reviewed epidemiologic studies in which participants had used a cell phone 10 years or more and noted "laterality" (the side of the head on which the phone was held). REF: Khurana VG, et al (2009). Cell phones and brain tumors: A review including the long-term epidemiologic data. *Surg Neurol* 2009 March 26. [Epub ahead of print]. Available at <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/sites/entrez> PMID: 19328536

In a letter in the same issue of *Surgical Neurology*, the Australian doctors summarized broader concerns about radiofrequency EMF exposure: "The proposed health ramifications of ubiquitous and chronic immersion in the electromagnetic fields (EMFs) of cell phones and transmission masts are not only limited to brain tumors but also include salivary gland tumors, male infertility, behavioral disturbances, and electrohypersensitivity (previously "microwave sickness syndrome").

~ On **April 8**, 50 Dutch doctors will present an appeal to leaders in politics and health in the Dutch government city The Hague calling for measures to minimize exposure to EMF

the Dutch government city The Hague calling for measures to minimize exposure to EMF . They note an increase in chronic diseases which parallel the "explosive increase in radiation exposure in the environment." Symptoms reportedly related to EMF exposure include palpitations, concentration and memory disorders, headache, fatigue, stress and sleep disorders. More information at <http://www.stralingsrisicos.nl>

~ **Australia's 60 Minutes** featured a segment on cellular phones and brain tumors. The video is available at http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=SuptoOcrSho&feature=channel_page
No word on whether or when CBS will air anything on this issue in the U.S.

Announcements

CHE Staffing Update

As of **March 30**, Shelby Gonzalez moved on from her position as CHE's administrative coordinator to become a full-time freelance writer and editor. She can be reached at shelbygonzalez@gmail.com. CHE is pleased to welcome Erika Sanders, a longtime associate of the Institute for Children's Environmental Health, as the new administrative coordinator. Erika can be reached at erika@healthandenvironment.org.

Christensen Publishes New Book

Jackie Hunt Christensen, co-coordinator of the PD & Environment Work Group, has published her second book. ***Life With A Battery-Operated Brain, A Patient's Guide to Deep Brain Stimulation Surgery for Parkinson's Disease*** (Langdon Street Press, April 2009) covers the steps in the process of deep brain stimulation (DBS), from being evaluated to living with the system on a day-to-day basis. There is a section about sources of electromagnetic interference and how they can interfere with the system. The book can be ordered from <http://www.lifewithbobbook.com> or order from an online or local bookstore.

Breast Cancer Fund Honors Dr. Ted Schettler

On **April 30**, the Breast Cancer Fund will honor Dr. Ted Schettler, science director at the Science and Environment Health Network and science advisor to CHE and Health Care Without Harm, with a science award at the organization's annual Heroes Tribute in San Francisco. The evening will celebrate the growing movement toward a safe and healthy future, and the heroes who are leading us there. Dr. Schettler will also be joined by women and children's health advocates Mary Brune of Making Our Milk Safe and Joan Blades of MomsRising.org and Breast Cancer Fund Strong Voice Linda Morton. To purchase tickets or find more information, please visit: www.breastcancerfund.org/heroestribute09.

Reports and Other Resources

Oregon State Public Health Division launches new environmental health tool

The Oregon Public Health Division announced the recently launched a new tool to help examine the connections between environmental hazards and disease. The Environmental Public Health Tracking (EPHT) network will, for the first time, provide access to environmental and health information for Oregon from a single source. This web-based data query system is part of a national network led by the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) that will provide similar data for 17 states across the US.

The Oregon EPHT network tracks key measures of environmental hazards, such as air and water quality, and also potentially related diseases, such as asthma and heart attacks. EPHT provides access to this information in a dynamic, web-based system that allows for the linkage of these measures for specific geographic areas in Oregon. For more information, please visit the Oregon EPHT network website: www.healthoregon.org/epht

Critical Windows of Development Launched by TEDX

TEDX announces its newest release! The Critical Windows of Development is a unique interactive webpage that pairs normal human development in the womb with laboratory research showing where and when low-dose exposure to bisphenol-A, phthalates and dioxin has effects.

[See the Critical Windows of Development](#)

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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