



Collaborative on Health and the Environment

eNewsletter -- December 2009



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Dear CHE Colleagues:

Maybe it's just me, but it feels like the environmental health train picked up some extraordinary speed in 2009. Starting with the National Academy of Science's report "[Science and Decisions: Advancing Risk Assessment](#)," which makes recommendations to address the current limitations of risk assessment; moving to the appointments of Dr. Lisa Jackson as the new EPA Administrator and Dr. Linda Birnbaum as the new Director of NIEHS; then to the seminal publication of [The Endocrine Society's statement](#) on the health implications of endocrine disrupting chemicals (and the [subsequent resolution on EDCs](#) passed by the American Medical Association); the publication of the "[Common Agenda for Health and the Environment](#)" by the Lowell Center for Sustainability with input from 100s of colleagues, offering principles for implementing concrete steps towards a healthier future; Nicholas Kristof's compelling series of New York Times op-eds focused on EDCs; Administrator Jackson's consistent message that we must ensure children's health is at the center of every regulatory and policy decision; the significant push to prioritize the health of vulnerable populations in the climate change discussions; and the increasing momentum on chemical policy reform on state and national levels -- to name just a few noteworthy events over the course of the year.

I also want to acknowledge that many of you, our CHE partners, played pivotal roles in these and other remarkable actions and publications this year -- often behind the scenes and in understated ways, but with no less potency. And of course, what we see manifesting today is built on decades of courageous and tenacious efforts of those on the front lines of science and on the fence lines of communities.

So what is next? I believe the burgeoning science and reflective discussions in CHE and elsewhere are encouraging us more and more to figure out how to move not only one train faster down a track, but to understand how myriad tracks interact and loop back and join together at different times and in different modalities -- in short, to apply complexity theory to ecological health in concrete, effective terms. Taking a systems approach would entail finding meaningful ways to address the fact that, as Michael Lerner, co-founder and Vice Chair of CHE, summarized in a recent e-mail to the CHE Science listserv, "a high number of different inherited and exogenous factors in and around the human organism encounter different inherited genetic dispositions and different patterns of gene expression so that different people reach the 'final common pathways' of different diseases for different combinations of reasons." We are seeing this in the scientific literature on metabolic syndrome, autism, Alzheimer's and many other conditions. The task at hand then is to press for restructuring our regulatory system, our food system, our health care system, and our economic system to make health, justice and sustainability the highest priorities -- in fact,

economic system to make healthy, justice and sustainability, and highest priorities, to make those inalienable rights of current and future generations. Daunting, yes. Impossible, no.

We each are engaged in various aspects of this dynamic system, and we each need to stay focused on our part to ensure its success. At the same time, we need to consistently review our efforts in relationship to the whole. This is nothing new. It just gets harder to do as our understanding of the variables and complexity grows. That said, if we bring our intelligence, creativity and wisdom to our collective conversations and initiatives, we can and will make healthier choices based on the best available science. That is what CHE is all about. In 2010, we invite you to continue to contribute your expertise and insights to our common work.

Warmest wishes for the holidays and a healthier-than-ever New Year,

Elise Miller, MEd
Director

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Collaborative on Health and the Environment

CHE Science Cafe Call
A Conversation with Elizabeth Grossman, author of *Chasing Molecules*
January 19, 2009 at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern

[RSVP for this call](#)

Known for her book *High Tech Trash*, an expose of the electronic waste industry, Elizabeth Grossman's new book, *Chasing Molecules: Poisonous Products, Human Health, and the Promise of Green Chemistry*, reveals the dangers and the extent of the chemicals that are found in everyday products such as BPA, perfluorinated compounds, brominated flame retardants, and phthalates, and offers up hope for a future without them. 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 CHE Director, Elise Miller, for a conversation with Grossman on **Tuesday January 19, 2009 at 11 AM Pacific / 2 PM Eastern.**

[RSVP for this call](#)

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, 2009 - CHE Fertility/Partnership call: [To Ban or Not to Ban: A Review of Atrazine from Both Sides of the Atlantic](#)
- November 11, 2009 - [Navigating the Scientific Evidence to Ensure Prevention](#)
- October 15, 2009 - [Late Lessons from Early Warnings: the Precautionary Principle 1896-2000: a Conversation with David Gee](#)
- September 30, 2009 - [CHE Cafe call with author Douglas Abrams](#)
- September 22, 2009 - [Food Matters: The Impact of Food Systems on Public Health](#)

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

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

Working Group Highlights:

CHE is proud to highlight each month new and exciting working group efforts, which continue to draw the link between health and the environment.

This month:

~ **CHE-LDDI** continues to move forward with partners on a biomonitoring project. A report is due to be released in February.

[Read more](#)

~ Be certain to note **upcoming CHE working group calls** from both CHE-Fertility and CHE Alaska. Details below.

CHE-Fertility

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

~ Save the Date: CHE Fertility call announced

Save the date for the next CHE-Fertility call, which will highlight the recently released Women's Voices for the Earth report, [Disinfectants Overkill](#). The call is scheduled for **Thursday, January 14 at 10:00 AM Pacific / 1:00 PM Eastern**. Please email julia@healthandenvironment.org if you plan to join the call so that we can reserve the correct number of lines.

Dial-in information:

1-270-400-2000

Access code: 198686#

Confirmed speakers:

- **Erin Switalski**, Executive Director, Women's Voices for the Earth
- **Alexandra Gorman Scranton**, MS, Director of Science and Research, Women's Voices for the Earth
- **Patricia Hunt**, PhD, Meyer Distinguished Professor, School of Molecular Biosciences, Washington State University
- **Ann Blake**, PhD, Environmental & Public Health Consulting

~ Several new resources are available for those partners interested in fertility and reproductive health issues:

~ New video: The Male Predicament

The Male Predicament is the informative and compelling lecture that Dr. Theo Colborn has delivered across the US and overseas. Using scientific facts, photos and a touch of humor, it describes in detail how males are susceptible to endocrine-disrupting chemicals.

[See the video](#)

~ New brochure: Toxic Matters

Toxic Matters is new guide that highlights how to prevent exposure to toxic substances at home, in the workplace and in your community. Toxic Matters is a publication of the University of California, San Francisco Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment (PRHE), From Advancing Science to Ensuring Prevention (FASTEP). FASTEP is a project of PRHE and an alliance of academic, government and non-governmental partners spanning the fields of reproductive, environmental, occupational and pediatric health and toxicology. The recommendations in this brochure are designed for women, men and children, and apply to everyone regardless of whether or not you're pregnant now or are planning to have children in the future.

[Learn more and download a pdf version of Toxic Matters](#)

~ New report: Earliest Exposures

New tests by the Washington Toxics Coalition reveal that children spend their first nine months in an environment that exposes them to known toxic chemicals. WTC tested nine pregnant women, from Washington, Oregon, and California, for chemicals including bisphenol A, phthalates, mercury, and "Teflon chemicals." The first-of-its kind study tested blood and urine from pregnant women during their second trimester of pregnancy and

found their bodies contaminated with chemicals found in a wide variety of consumer products. This new study was completed by the Washington Toxics Coalition in collaboration with the Commonweal Biomonitoring Resource Center and the Toxic-Free Legacy Coalition.

[Read the report](#)

CHE LDDI

~**coordinated by Laura Abulafia, laura@healthandenvironment.org and Elise Miller, CHE Director, elise@healthandenvironment.org**

~ **LDDI biomonitoring project:** The LDDI biomonitoring project is working with the larger environmental health community and the Raben Group, a communications firm in Washington DC, on a strategic plan for media and educational opportunities gained from this project. A report release is planned for the second week in February, and will coincide with the LDA meeting in Baltimore MD in which participants from the biomonitoring project will participate in a symposium to share their experiences in the project. Additional speakers at the February meeting include policymakers such as Maryland Assemblyman James Hubbard, who introduced environmental-health legislation in Maryland on BPA and other chemicals and heads a group of state legislators on TSCA reform. For more information on the biomonitoring project, contact Laura Abulafia at laura@healthandenvironment.org, and for more information on the LDA symposium please contact Maureen Swanson at mwsanson@ldaamerica.org.

~ **LDDI leadership meets in Seattle:** The LDDI leadership group consisting of the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD), Autism Society of America (ASA), the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA) and the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD) met in Seattle, WA for a one day strategic planning meeting on December 1st to develop goals for 2010.

~ **The LDDI website** has been fully incorporated into the CHE website, thanks to web guru Nancy Snow. Please visit this fantastic new site by visiting: www.healthandenvironment.org/working_groups/learning. The site will also soon be accessible through an additional URL that's more meaningful and easier to remember. Look for more information in a future issue of this bulletin.

~ **AAIDD monthly teleconference:** AAIDD is hosting it's monthly research and science teleconference series on Tuesday December 15th with speaker Irva Hertz-Picciotto, PhD, MPH on the topic of "Autism and Environment: What do we know? What don't we know?". For more information and to access materials, please visit www.aaid.org/ehi or contact Laura Abulafia at laura@aaidd.org.

~ **ASA environmental health meetings:** The Environmental Health program of the Autism Society of America has a series of upcoming meetings in 2010 including one in January in Colorado on environmental health. For more information please contact Donna Ferullo at dferullo@autism-society.org.

~ **The Mental Health Working Group** is working on a trifold brochure for clinicians on pesticides and mental health. For more information, contact Ed Seliger with the NADD at eseliger@thenadd.org.

CHE EMF

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

~ On November 17, 2009, internationally known **scientific experts met in Stavanger, Norway** to share research on the biological effects of microwave radiation and to develop policy recommendations to protect public health as wireless technologies increasingly invade public and private spaces. Concern about exposure to emissions from mobile phones and supporting infrastructure, Wi-Fi and Wi-Max networks, DECT phones, is mounting among scientists, nations and communities. CHE partner Cindy Sage attended the conference and will have more information about outcomes in the next newsletter.

Based on evidence presented at the Stavanger conference, the Norwegian Health Directorate is preparing a guide for health professionals who encounter patients who

The Directorate is preparing a guide for health professionals and concerned patients who report symptoms related to electromagnetic radiation exposure. The Directorate also advised creating "clean rooms" in hospitals (free of radiation from mobile phones, wireless networks, etc.) for cancer patients, to avoid subjecting them to the additional burden of microwave radiation during treatment.

~ Liechtenstein may become the **first country to reject the benefits of mobile communication** in favor of protecting public health against exposure to electromagnetic radiation. The proposed environmental protection law would set standards 10 times stricter than existing regulations: 0.6 V/m (volts per meter).

[More information](#)

~ The state of Maine has proposed a **The Children's Wireless Protection Act**, a new law requiring a warning label on cellular phones stating "WARNING: THIS DEVICE EMITS ELECTROMAGNETIC RADIATION, EXPOSURE TO WHICH MAY CAUSE BRAIN CANCER. USERS, ESPECIALLY CHILDREN AND PREGNANT WOMEN, SHOULD KEEP THIS DEVICE AWAY FROM THE HEAD AND BODY." All cellular phones sold in Maine must carry this label. This legislation will be voted on in early 2010. For a copy of the legislation, email Nancy Evans nancywrite@comcast.net

~ Using a cellular phone while driving continues to be a hazard, causing 2,600 fatal auto crashes a year and more than half a million injury accidents. In the December 7 New York Times, Matt Richtel traces the history of telephone use in cars, the risk of which has been known since car phones were introduced in the 1980s. Apparently status outweighed safety.

[For more information](#)

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE Alaska

~ coordinated by Pam Miller, pkmiller@akaction.net

~ **Teleconference: Hazardous Chemicals in Health Care: A Snapshot of Chemicals in Doctors and Nurses, Health Implications, and Solutions**
December 15, at 9 AM Alaska / 10 AM Pacific

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 colleen@akaction.org.

[Learn more about the call](#)

Alaska Community Action on Toxics (ACAT) in partnership with Physicians for Social Responsibility (PSR), American Nurses Association (ANA) and Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) released the "[Hazardous Chemicals In Health Care](#)" report in early November 2009, detailing the first investigation ever of chemicals found in the bodies of health care professionals, including two Alaskan participants. The study found that all of the 20 project participants had toxic chemicals associated with health care in their bodies. Each participant had at least 24 individual chemicals present, four of which are on the recently released Environmental Protection Agency list of priority chemicals for regulation.

Join the call to learn more about this national biomonitoring project and the two Alaskan participants who were tested. What are the implications of the presence of these chemicals in the health care setting and our bodies? What does the latest scientific research demonstrate about the health effects of these chemicals? Are there safe alternatives? What are the failures of current chemicals policy and what are preventative and protective solutions?

Presenters will include Kristen Welker-Hood, ScD, MSN, RN, director of Environment and Health Programs, Physicians For Social Responsibility, co-principal investigator and a co-author of the report; and Roxanne Chan, RN, L.Ac., project participant.

CHE Washington

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

~ **CHE-WA hosted a special event and meeting on December 1, 2009 at Antioch University in Seattle, WA:** Doug Abrams, author of *Eye of the Whale* ([read more about Doug and his novel](#)), and Sheela Sathyanarayana, MD, MPH ([read more about Sheela](#)), researcher and assistant professor at University of Washington and Seattle Children's Hospital, joined CHE WA members in Seattle to discuss endocrine-disrupting chemicals and how they can impact the health of wildlife and humans.

Doug, who joined us from California, offered a dynamic presentation that wove together readings from his novel with the research he did to inform his writing. Sheela then provided some of the latest science on EDCs and what we can do to reduce our exposures to them.

~ **CHE-WA coordinator Steve Gilbert and others present Particles on the Wall at Cafe Allegro, Seattle:** Particles on the Wall is an interdisciplinary exhibit featuring visual art, literary art and science exploring major elements of the nuclear age. The exhibit addresses our history related to the Hanford Nuclear Site, as well as broader nuclear and peace issues. Contributing artists include Mike Bristow, Janice Camp, Dianne Dickeman, T. Michael Gardiner, William Witherup and others. The exhibit will run from January 3--January 30, 2010 with an opening night reception on Friday, January 8, 2010 at 7 PM.

For more information, please contact Nancy Dickeman at nancydickeman@gmail.com or 206-354-2170.

Announcements and News Highlights

New Consortium on Climate Change and Population Health Invites Participation
[SeaTrust Institute](#) and [IGI Global](#) invite participation in an online international Consortium on Climate Change and Population Health. This Consortium's primary mission is to support interdisciplinary efforts that imbed sustainability, human health, climate change and public policy perspectives in order to effectively address population health concerns in the context of climate change.
[Read more](#)

2nd Annual Northwest Environmental Health Conference to be held in Oregon March 5 -6, 2010
The Oregon Environmental Council, the Oregon Student Nurses Association, the Oregon Chapter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, Multnomah County Environmental Health Services, Health Care Without Harm and others are organizing the **Second Annual NW Environmental Health Conference**. Registration opens December 14, 2009.
[More information](#)

Environmental Working Group tests cord blood in minority infants
In all, the tests found as many as 232 chemicals in the 10 newborns, all of minority descent. While the sample is too small to project national trends, the minority cord blood study, commissioned by EWG in conjunction with Rachel's Network, has produced hard new evidence that American children are being exposed, beginning in the womb, to complex mixtures of dangerous substances that may have lifelong consequences.
[Read more](#)

December 2009 issue of Environmental Health Perspectives available online
<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/docs/2009/117-12/toc.html>

December 2009 issue of Environmental Factor available online
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/index.cfm>

Reports, Resources and Other Updates

CHE's searchable calendar

CHE provides a searchable calendar of environmental health events from throughout the US and around the world: <http://www.healthandenvironment.org/cgi-bin/searchevents.cgi>

New report: Everybody's Movement: Environmental Justice and Climate Change

With the United Nations Climate Change Conference soon convening in Copenhagen, the report articulates the need to create a vibrant climate change movement that engages the full spectrum of U.S. society, in part by better integrating environmental justice. It is based on interviews with twenty-three environmental justice leaders from across the country. Importantly, the topic of gender-related impacts of climate change is mentioned in the report.

[Read more](#)

Coal Pollution Damages Human Health at Every Stage of Coal Life Cycle, a new report from Physicians for Social Responsibility

Physicians for Social Responsibility today released a groundbreaking medical report, "Coal's Assault on Human Health," which takes a new look at the devastating impacts of coal on the human body

[Read more](#)

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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