



Collaborative on Health and the Environment eNewsletter -- August 2009



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Dear CHE Partners:

Though CHE partners represent diverse perspectives and sectors, one interest likely to be shared by most is an improved chemicals policy—one that is truly health protective. At the root of many of the environmental health maladies and concerns summarized in CHE's original consensus statement is the outdated and slapdash manner in which industrial chemicals have been developed and marketed. Given the increasing incidence of chronic diseases and disabilities in which environmental factors play a role, it has become clear that the so-called free market has failed us in this regard.

On CHE's June partner call, discussion focused on a new consensus document from the Lowell Center for Sustainable Production and the Toward Tomorrow Initiative, "[A Common Agenda for Health and the Environment: Goals for the Next Generation and Steps to Get There](#)", including a dozen worthy goals outlined in the report. One of those goals is "developing a new integrated chemicals policy for the United States to phase out the manufacture and use of disease-causing chemicals such as carcinogens and reproductive toxicants, and to ensure the safety of all chemicals remaining in commerce through rapid decision-making and incentives for the substitution of hazardous substances by safer alternatives and green chemistry."

Debates over how that reform should be structured echo the current heated discussions about healthcare reform. In fact, it is not clear yet whether fundamental chemical policy reform will take precedence over other regulatory and legislative priorities. However, change is in the air—in large part due to the concerted efforts of many CHE partners to ensure that emerging environmental health science is accessible to lay audiences, policymakers and other concerned sectors. A striking *Washington Post* story this week entitled, "Chemical Industry Lends Support to Reform", begins: "In a reversal, chemical industry leaders said last week they are joining environmentalists, public health groups and consumer advocates in seeking more robust federal regulation of chemicals." The [full story](#) is worth reading.

What might this "reversal" mean in practice? We've already seen some analogous pledges fall by the wayside over the years as well as in the current healthcare reform debate, but there is at least some ground for hope here. Stricter European chemical regulations are forcing market-based changes upon American and multinational chemical interests. And in the US, many states, such as Maine, Washington and Minnesota, are taking bold legislative action as well. Also this past week, in a piece that appeared in the journal *Science*, "A New Wave of Chemical Regulations Just Ahead?" described these efforts and reported that "Lisa Jackson, the Obama Administration's newly appointed EPA director, has listed reform of chemical regulation as one of her top five priorities."

This is a vastly complex arena. But again, there are some encouraging signs. We know that many CHE partners, using the best available science, are hard at work to ensure that chemical policy reform becomes a reality and safer alternatives are available in the marketplace. Stay tuned, as we plan to bring you more news of these ongoing efforts.

Steve Heilig, MPH

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

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Collaborative on Health and the Environment

CHE Partnership Calls

In celebration of summer, and in recognition of busy summer vacation schedules, CHE takes the month of August off from hosting a CHE Partnership call. We are currently planning calls for the fall and will be announcing a September call soon.

In the meantime, this is an excellent time for us to highlight the many important Partnership calls that have taken place thus far in 2009. CHE [archives](#) all Partnership calls and each archived call includes an MP3 recording. We encourage you to listen to any calls that you might have missed in the first part of the year, or re-listen to the ones that you found particularly informative.

2009 to date CHE Partnership calls:

- July 28, 2009 - [Precaution's Reach: A Principle in Action](#)
- June 23, 2009 - [A Common Agenda for Health and the Environment: Goals for the Next Generation and Steps to Get There](#)
- June 12, 2009 - [Ecological Intelligence: A Conversation with Daniel Goleman](#)
- June 4, 2009 - [CHE Science Cafe call with Dr. Steve Gilbert](#)
- May 7, 2009 - [Metabolic Syndrome: At the Crossroads of the Western Disease Cluster](#)
- April 6, 2009 - [Battle Scars: Findings from the Federal Report on Gulf War Veteran's Illness](#)
- March 26, 2009 - [Integrative Medicine: The State of the Science and Its Interface with Environmental Health: A Conversation with Dean Ornish, MD](#)
- February 24, 2009 - [Girl, Disrupted: Hormone Disruptors and Women's Reproductive Health](#)
- February 10, 2009 - [Critical Windows of Development: A Conversation with Dr. Theo Colborn and Distinguished Commentators](#)
- January 29, 2009 - [Cumulative Risk Assessment: The National Academy of Sciences Report on Phthalates and Male Reproductive Health](#)
- January 8, 2009 - [Crash Landing: Environmental and Health Costs \(and Benefits?\) of the Economic Recession: A Conversation with Lester Brown](#)
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CHE Partner Spotlight

CHE Partner Douglas Abrams: Seeking Answers in Stories

by *Shelby Gonzalez*

As CHE Partner Douglas Abrams explains it, the idea for his new novel, [Eye of the Whale](#), sprang from an unexpectedly provocative sequence of events. One evening, he read his twin daughters a children's story about a trapped whale. Later, a visiting scientist friend related some "astonishing" facts about environmental threats to human and animal health.

"I asked myself, what if these events were connected? What if whales and humans were threatened by the same dangers?"

[Read more](#)

CHE Working and Regional Group Updates

General Working Group Updates:

Two of CHE's working groups have been upgrading and updating their pages on the CHE website. The new [Initiative for Children's Environmental Health Working Group](#) and the [Fertility/Reproductive Health Working Group](#) have both expanded their areas to include more resources and better navigation within their sites. Look for more updates in the coming weeks.

CHE has also recently upgraded its systems for announcing and archiving working group calls on the [CHE website](#). Please note the new "Working Group Calls" box on the homepage (lower left hand corner), announcing upcoming working group calls, and please see the new Working Group archive page at: http://www.healthandenvironment.org/news/wg_calls. We expect these archive pages to become more robust with background resources and call notes in the near future.

CHE Fertility

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

~ **CHE Blogs for the American Fertility Association:** Heather Sarantis, Women's Health Program Manager at Commonweal, has recently started blogging for the American Fertility Association on environmental reproductive health issues. Her first entry was on Kristof's hormone disruptor columns and can be found at: <http://www.theafa.org/community/blog>. For questions or comments, email Heather at heather@healthandenvironment.org.

~ **Please Fill Out the CHE-Fertility Online Survey:** If you can spare a few minutes, please fill out this [survey](#) regarding the CHE-Fertility Working Group. By doing so, you will help shape CHE-Fertility call topics for the next year, in addition to providing valuable input about other aspects of the group. We will use this information to design future teleconferences and programs around your interests! Please fill out the [survey](#) by Wednesday, August 19.

~ **Shaping Our Legacy is Now Available in Spanish:** Shaping Our Legacy: Reproductive Health and the Environment, the comprehensive report from the 2007 UCSF-CHE Summit on Environmental Challenges to Reproductive Health and Fertility is now available in Spanish, courtesy of the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment (PRHE). Link to the report from the CHE-Fertility [what's new box](#).

~ **The Center for American Progress Releases "Reproductive Roulette":** This new slide show is a valuable tool that outlines declining reproductive health and dangerous chemical exposures. [View the full presentation and accompanying fact sheet](#)

~ **New Prenatal Educational Video in the Pipeline:** Vida Health Communications, Inc. is in the process of finalizing a video for prenatal providers and their patients about managing environmental risks during pregnancy. Vida is dedicated to improving the health of women, children and families through the production of evidence-based educational media for clinical, patient and lay audiences.

[Watch the video](#)

They would love to hear any comments or criticisms you have, particularly how you would use the video. Feel free to pass this along to others in the field who would be interested. Contact John Craine, MS, MBA, Principal Investigator, Vida Health Communications, Inc. with comments: john.craine@vida-health.com

CHE LDDI

~ coordinated by **Laura Abulafia**, laura@healthandenvironment.org and **Elise**

Miller, CHE Director, elise@healthandenvironment.org

~ **LDDI Biomonitoring Project:** Leaders in LDDI, including representatives from the Learning Disabilities Association of America (LDA), the National Association for the Dually Diagnosed (NADD), the American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) and the Autism Society of America, recently convened a conference call to discuss the LDDI biomonitoring report release. The data from this important project will be available early this fall. A report analyzing the data will be released later in the fall in concert with media outreach and policy related activities.

~ **State Outreach:** AAIDD, LDA, and ASA are partnering with local organizations in Illinois to co-host an educational forum on toxic chemicals and public health. This event will be held in Chicago on October 2nd, and will include health professionals, policymakers, and concerned citizens. For more information, to register, or to view the save-the-date, please visit www.ehinitiative.org or contact Laura Abulafia, Director of Education and Outreach for AAIDD's Environmental Health Initiative, at laura@aaidd.org.

~ **Partner Activities:**

a) ASA, now known as **The Autism Society**, hosted 1500 parents, educators, clinicians and persons with autism at its 40th annual conference in Chicago July 22-25. Over 200 sessions enlightened attendees to autism biology, behavior, education, community, life skills, policy needs and latest research. Highlights included a keynote panel on the future of autism with NIH, AAP and insurance heads; the first annual science symposium, "Science that Makes a Difference;" expert lectures on autism and the environment, integrative neurology, the whole body problem of autism, treatment guided research, and a new web infrastructure supporting treatment guided research and environmental exposure reporting in the Continuing Medical Education Track; and a compelling keynote panel of persons on the autism spectrum.

b) **AAIDD** is hosting its Region X meeting in Connecticut October 2nd and the topic will be environmental health and intellectual and developmental disabilities. The keynote speaker will be Dr. Mark Mitchell, who leads the Connecticut Coalition for Environmental Justice and is a LDDI member. For more information, or to register, please contact Michael Bloom at bloomm18@yahoo.com.

c) A pre-conference symposium on "Mental Health and Environmental Exposures: The Emerging Evidence" is planned for the 26th Annual NADD Conference and Exhibit Show, which is taking place in New Orleans, October 21-23, 2009. Elise Miller, MEd, is the pre-conference chair, and she is being joined by Theodore Slotkin, PhD, and Cheryl Beseler, PhD.

~ **Mental Health: The Mental Health and Environment Working Group** is currently developing three products: a) an article reviewing the state of research concerning the association between pesticide exposures and psychiatric symptoms; b) a clinician guide for mental health practitioners and primary care physicians concerning pesticide exposure and affective disorders; and c) a brochure to inform patients about possible symptoms of pesticide exposure and ways to reduce exposure.

The next call of the Mental Health and the Environment Working Group is scheduled for **Thursday, August 27, 2009 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern**. If you are interested in participating in the call please contact Ed Seliger at eseliger@thenadd.org.

CHE Regional Working Groups Updates

CHE Washington Alaska

~ **Coordinated by Pam Miller, pkmiller@akaction.net**

~ CHE Alaska will host it's next teleconference, **What's On Your Food? Pesticide Residues--Science, Health Effects and Public Policy** on **Wednesday, August 26, 2009 at 9 AM Alaska Time**. Presenters will discuss the latest science

20, 2009 at 9 AM Alaska time. Presenters will discuss the latest science concerning the health effects of pesticides and what is known about pesticide residues in market foods. Presenters will also give an overview of the system of law that falls short of protecting public health. The teleconference will provide an opportunity to discuss possibilities for civic engagement to address the problem.

Featured presenters:

- **Jay Feldman**, MS, Executive Director, Beyond Pesticides
- **Jen Sass**, Ph.D., Senior Scientist, Natural Resources Defense Council (NRDC)
- **Karl Tupper**, Ph.D., Staff Scientist, Pesticide Action Network North America (PANNA)

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.

CHE Washington

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

~ **CHE-WA's Children's Environmental Health** working group is hosting a Northwest Children's Environmental Health Forum October 1-2, 2009 at the Tukwila Community Center. Confirmed national speakers include Ted Schettler, MD who will provide an overview of children's environmental health issues, Shanna Swan, PhD speaking on endocrine disruptors and children's health, Bruce Lanphear, PhD speaking on neurotoxicants and children's brain development, and Michael Skinner, PhD addressing multigenerational health impacts linked to environmental exposures. Anyone interested in being involved with this event, or who would like to learn more about the efforts of the CHE-WA children's environmental health working group may contact Margo Young at young.margo@epamail.epa.gov, Gail Gensler at gail.gensler@kingcounty.gov, or Aimee Boulanger at aboulanger@iceh.org.

Announcements and News Highlights

Endocrine Society calls for precautionary action

The Endocrine Society, a highly respected international medical society of over 14,000 members in 100 countries, issued a seminal new report stating that exposures to endocrine disrupting chemicals are a growing threat to human health and well-being. The report explicitly states that "the precautionary principle is critical to enhancing health."

The paper also asserts that in order to prevent disease, "Our chemical policies at the local, state and national levels, as well as globally, need to be formulated, financed and implemented to ensure the best public health." Given the stature of The Endocrine Society, as well as its "Sister Societies", such as the American Diabetes Society and the American Obesity Society, this report sends a clear signal to other health-related professional societies as well as policymakers that we can no longer ignore environmental contributors to a wide range of diseases and disabilities-in fact, we need to take a precautionary approach on every level of decision-making.

For more information on the report, please see: <http://www.endo-society.org/journals/scientificstatements/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>

Because the calendar typically includes several dozen conferences, lectures, meetings, trainings and other events, visitors can search by the type of event, the month, the location, and other fields. Events have also been coded so that visitors can **select those of interest to each of CHE's various working groups.**

CDC launches National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network

The Environmental Health Tracking Network <http://ephtracking.cdc.gov> is the first program available to the general public, as well as scientists and health professionals, that follows environmental exposures and chronic health conditions on the CDC's website.

Pesticide Action Network launches new database linking government food test results to pesticide toxicology science

What's On My Food? Database: <http://www.whatsonmyfood.org>

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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