



# Collaborative on Health and the Environment

## eNewsletter -- March 2009



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Dear CHE Colleagues:

The drastic global decline in financial markets and the world economy reminds us forcefully that there is no more powerful index of health than socioeconomic status. The adverse health effects of people losing their jobs, their homes and their health insurance are incalculable. While we can construct hopeful scenarios about how these economic changes could lead to the development of better systems and policies that truly support environmental health in the future, the casualties of the downturn are now known personally to virtually every CHE Partner.

One specific reality close to many of our hearts is what the crisis means for our work in environmental health science, in clinical medicine, in patient communities and in environmental health advocacy. The precipitous decline in foundation portfolios and individual giving will cause a severe and unprecedented contraction in funding for environmental health work. Many CHE partners are now discussing how to creatively respond given these tremendous challenges.

Meanwhile, the policy environment for progress on environmental public health has rarely looked more promising. National initiatives to reduce income disparities, strengthen education, address climate change and achieve universal health care are all directly related to environmental public health. While chemical policy reform is much less visibly on many policymakers' agendas, a wide coalition of diverse organizations and constituencies are working together in support of a legislative initiative that would fundamentally reform the Toxic Substances Control Act (TSCA).

While CHE does not take positions on legislative initiatives, we do report on important policy developments in the field. Modernizing TSCA - so that it reflects current scientific understanding - would go a long way toward ensuring that chemicals available on the market and found in everyday products are not exposing workers and consumers to substances that may undermine their health. Though this is only one of the ways in which new environmental health safeguards regarding chemical contaminants may be developed, it is likely to be a significant dimension of the effort to move the United States in the same direction the European Union and Canada are already moving - toward chemical regulations protective of human health.

In this context, the recent Summit on Integrative Medicine in Washington, DC, sponsored by the Institute of Medicine and the Bravewell Collaborative, is important to mention. Many CHE Partners attended the Summit, and a lively discussion of its significance has been taking place on CHE Integrative Health Working Group and CHE Science listservs. What was

...most exciting was the clear evidence that the broad community of integrative health scientists and clinicians represented at the Summit are thinking about their work in a way that profoundly parallels the dialogue within CHE on an ecological health/complexity theory/systems biology approach to understanding both individual and collective health outcomes. Also in Washington at around the same time, an important Congressional committee was hearing from some environmental health advocates, including some CHE partners, on the crucial issue of federal regulatory policy in regards to toxic chemicals (for more information, see Announcements below).

It may be that integrative medicine scientists and practitioners will be among the pioneers of the ecological health paradigm at the heart of CHE environmental health science work. Given the widespread public interest in integrative medicine and integrative healthcare, this is a promising development.

In all these critical areas of discussion, so relevant to our health and our future, we will continue to keep CHE Partners informed and engaged.

Michael Lerner  
Vice Chair  
Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)

## CHE Partnership Calls

--CHE Partnership Call--

### **Integrative Medicine: The State of the Science and Its Interface with Environmental Health: A Conversation with Dean Ornish, MD**

**Thursday, March 26 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern**

This special CHE conversation on the state of the science in integrative medicine and its interface with environmental health will feature renowned physician and author **Dean Ornish, MD**, founder and president of the Preventative Medicine Research Institute. Join us on **Thursday, Mar 26 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern** for a call exploring this important subject.

#### **RSVP for this Call**

On February 25-27, the Institute of Medicine and the Bravewell Collaborative held a Summit on Integrative Medicine and Public Health at IOM's offices in Washington, DC. Dr. Ornish gave a widely praised keynote address on the state of the science in integrative medicine.

[View Dr. Ornish's speech](#)

#### **About the Speaker:**

**Dean Ornish, MD**, is the founder and president of the non-profit Preventive Medicine Research Institute in Sausalito, California. For over 30 years, Dr. Ornish has directed clinical research demonstrating, for the first time, that comprehensive lifestyle changes may begin to reverse even severe coronary heart disease, without drugs or surgery. He recently directed the first randomized controlled trial demonstrating that comprehensive lifestyle changes may stop or reverse the progression of prostate cancer. His current research showed that comprehensive lifestyle changes affect gene expression, "turning on" disease-preventing genes and "turning off" genes that promote cancer and heart disease.

He is the author of six best-selling books, including his most recent book, *The Spectrum*. He writes a monthly column for Newsweek magazine. We strongly recommend reviewing Dr. Ornish's IOM presentation before joining us for this call.

The call will be moderated by Michael Lerner, President of Commonweal. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

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**--CHE Partnership Call--  
Battle Scars: Findings from the Federal Report on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses**

**Monday, April 6 at 10 AM Pacific/ 1 PM Eastern**

In November 2008, a federal panel issued a report concluding that the long-contested Gulf War Veterans' Illness (also known as Gulf War Syndrome) is a real illness.

Join us on **Monday, April 6 at 10 AM Pacific / 1 PM Eastern** for an in-depth exploration of the report, the controversy, the long struggle for recognition, and the report's implications for research and veterans' health care going forward. This call will be moderated by Steve Heilig, MPH, Director of Public Health and Education, San Francisco Medical Society and CHE. The call will last one hour and will be recorded for archival purposes.

**RSVP for This Call**

Speakers:

- **Jim Binns**, Chairman, Research Advisory Committee on Gulf War Veterans' Illnesses
- **Jim Bunker**, President, National Gulf War Resource Center
- **Paul Sullivan**, Director, Veterans for Common Sense

More Information about the GWVI Report:

CNN.com Article

<http://www.cnn.com/2008/HEALTH/11/17/gulf.war.illness.study/>

Access the Report

<http://www1.va.gov/RAC-GWVI/>

**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:

- 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](#)"
- Dec 9, 2008 - "[Growing Danger: Pesticides, Other Agricultural Exposures, and Cancer: A Conversation with Dr. Tyrone Hayes](#)"

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

[elise@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org)

~ **New Mental Health and Environment Working Group:** This new working group, a subcommittee of LDDI, will have its first conference call on **Friday, March 13 at 1:00 p.m. Eastern**. The group will be 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. If you are interested in participating in the **March 13th** call or joining the working group, please contact Ed Seliger at NADD for more information: [eseliger@thenadd.org](mailto:eseliger@thenadd.org).

~ **Congressional testimony:** LDDI member, Maureen Swanson, Director of the Learning Disabilities Association's Healthy Children's Project, was invited to testify before a House Energy and Commerce subcommittee on February 27. Her testimony, along with that of other invited witnesses, focused on the need to reform the Toxic Substances Control Act. See article: <http://www.nytimes.com/gwire/2009/02/27/27greenwire-industry-group-calls-for-modernization-of-toxic-9908.html>

~ **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>

~ **The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) Environmental Health Initiative (EHI)** held its latest Research and Science teleconference yesterday (March 10th) entitled "Indoor Air Quality and Health, Part II." Howard Brightman, ScD, PE, CHI was the presenter. Please contact Laura Abulafia, Director of the EHI, at [laura@aaidd.org](mailto:laura@aaidd.org) or go to [www.ehinitiative.org](http://www.ehinitiative.org) for more information on this teleconference series and other activities. In addition, please contact Laura if you are interested in applying for AAIDD's EHI new Director of Health Policy position.

~ **LDDI biomonitoring project:** The planning group for the LDDI biomonitoring project expects to finalize the list of participants and chemicals to be tested this month. For more information, please contact Sharyle Patton at [spatton@igc.org](mailto:spatton@igc.org).

~ **The LDDI Working Group's** next monthly call is scheduled for **Tuesday, April 7 at 2:00 p.m. Eastern**. The focus of this call will be on communication technologies LDDI members would like to incorporate on its web site to improve information sharing among LDDI members (and among their respective web sites and members) and with other interested constituencies. More information regarding the call will be circulated on the LDDI listserv closer to the time. Contact: Elise Miller at [elise@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org)

## CHE Fertility

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

~ The **MP3 recordings** of the February 24 **CHE Fertility/Partnership Call** -- Girl, Disrupted: Hormone Disruptors and Women's Reproductive Health [http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership\\_calls/5535](http://www.healthandenvironment.org/partnership_calls/5535) -- and the January 13 CHE Fertility Call -- Shaping Our Legacy: How Far Have We Come Since the 2007 UCSF-CHE Summit on Environmental Challenges to Reproductive Health and Fertility? <http://healthandenvironment.org/articles/doc/5188> -- are available for download.

These calls were vibrant conversations among diverse participants on recent reports highlighting environmental impacts to reproductive health and fertility. For more information and to request hard copies of these educational and outreach materials, please contact [julia@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:julia@healthandenvironment.org). Stay tuned for upcoming CHE Fertility call announcements.

~ We also encourage you to take advantage of two upcoming clinical education opportunities provided by the Association of Reproductive Health Professionals <http://www.arhp.org/> (ARHP) to receive continued clinical training credit for webinars on reproductive health and the environment, featuring presentations from Dr. Ted Schettler, Science Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network and CHE, and Dr. Tracey Woodruff, Director of the Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment (PRHE) at the University of California, San Francisco.

These webinars are part of a new clinical education program at ARHP, *Exposing Environmental Impacts on Reproductive Health*. For more information please see: <http://www.arhp.org/professional-education/programs/environmental-impacts>

For more information on these webinars and to register please see:

For more information on these webinars and to register please see:

<http://www.arhp.org/Professional-Education/Medical-Education-Opportunities/Webinars>

We deeply welcome CHE Partners who are interested in fertility and reproductive health issues to join the CHE Fertility/ Reproductive Health Working Group. If you are interested, please contact CHE Fertility's coordinator at [Julia@HealthandEnvironment.org](mailto:Julia@HealthandEnvironment.org).

### **CHE EMF**

~ coordinated by Nancy Evans, [nancywrite@comcast.net](mailto:nancywrite@comcast.net) and Cindy Sage, [sage@silcom.com](mailto:sage@silcom.com)

~ A Committee of the European Parliament overwhelmingly endorsed a resolution dealing with the growing public and scientific concern over exposures to electromagnetic fields (EMF), including exposures from cellular (mobile) phones, base station antennas (masts), and other wireless devices. In a 43-1 vote, the European Parliament Committee on the Environment, Public Health and Food Safety adopted a resolution urging the European Commission to address concerns about health risks from EMF. The resolution will be voted on by the full Parliament on March 26, 2009.

The full report and result of the final vote in Committee is available at:

<http://www.europarl.europa.eu/oie1/file.jsp?id=5680652>

~ Cindy Sage attended the February meeting of the European Commission Workshop on EMF and Health in Brussels, which addressed science, policy and public concerns about EMF, particularly radiofrequency (RF) and cell phone use as well as occupational exposure in EU countries. Conclusions of the BioInitiative Report [www.bioinitiative.org](http://www.bioinitiative.org) were presented by Professor Michael Kundi, Medical University of Vienna, and BioInitiative Author, David Gee, European Environmental Agency. The CHE-HEAL group was represented by Christian Farrar-Hockley on the significance of EMF among other health and environmental issues that CHE-HEAL covers in the EU countries.

~ A series of articles on EMF health effects is beginning in the journal *Pathophysiology*, and includes an article by Cindy Sage and David Carpenter on Public Health Implications of Wireless Technologies. The series addresses the effects of radiofrequency radiation from wireless technologies and ELF (powerline frequency) exposure. Abstracts are available online at [www.sciencedirect.com](http://www.sciencedirect.com)

~ Although little or no research on EMF is underway in the U.S., international studies continue to suggest cause for concern, particularly with regard to cellular phones and other wireless technologies. For example, in the March issue of *Environmental Health Perspectives*, Michael Kundi reviews 33 peer-reviewed epidemiologic studies on cell phone use and suggests that the risk of brain tumors may be underestimated. <http://www.ehponline.org/docs/2008/11902/abstract.html>

Australian Interphone researcher Bruce Armstrong said in a lecture in late 2008, that "we still don't know" whether cell phones increase the risk of brain tumors. His analysis is based on the still unpublished results of the Australian Interphone study. *Microwave News* includes a commentary (and link to a video of Armstrong's lecture) on this and other current EMF science [www.microwavenews.com](http://www.microwavenews.com)

~ We are introducing a new feature called "The Noble Forum" on the CHE-EMF list. From time to time, you will see invited commentaries from experts who share their perspectives on health, public policy, environmental and ethical issues related to electromagnetic fields.

## **Announcements**

### **CHE Staffing Update**

As of **March 30**, Shelby Gonzalez will be moving 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](mailto: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](mailto:erika@healthandenvironment.org)

administrative coordinator. Linda can be reached at [ELINDA@healthandenvironment.org](mailto:ELINDA@healthandenvironment.org).

### **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](http://www.breastcancerfund.org/heroestribute09).

### **ALA Announces Important Victory for Clean Air Standards**

The American Lung Association (ALA), along with allies and environmental organizations, has announced important gains in the fight for clean air standards that adequately protect public health. First, the federal appeals courts has instructed the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency to review and reconsider their 2006 decision on the national air quality standards for particulate matter (PM 2.5). Secondly, the ALA and other public health and environmental groups have issued a clear and urgent agenda to Congress and the Obama Administration titled *Protect the Air We Breathe: An Agenda for Clean Air*. ALA has also developed a summary of five top issues related to clean air that must be addressed in the months to come. To read more see: <http://www.lungusa.org>

### **Congressional Hearing Held on Toxic Substances Regulation**

Last month, a Congressional hearing was held titled "Revisiting the Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976". Chaired by Congressman Henry Waxman of California, the hearing featured several CHE partners and other leading advocates, as well as chemical industry representatives. To see the agenda and access presentations, see: [Energy of Commerce Homepage](#)

### **CHE Partner Dr. Pete Myers in New YouTube Interview**

Dr. John Peterson Myers, co-author of the landmark book "Our Stolen Future", is featured in a new 8-minute interview discussing developments in the decade since his book was published, including science on endocrine disruptors and need for updated policy approaches: [See video](#)

### **News from the NIEHS**

The March 2009 issue of the Environmental Factor, the newsletter of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, is now online at: <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/index.cfm>

This publication includes updates on policy, science, funding and other news which is likely to be of interest to many CHE partners. It is well worth a look for a diverse list of topics about some of the leaders in the field and current trends as seen from the federal perspective and beyond.

### **NIEHS/NIOSH RFA: Community Exposures Information Collection and Environmental Public Health Action**

The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS) and National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH) have released a new Request for Applications (RFA) to solicit applications designed to collect information on community exposures to environmental or occupational agents or exposure-related diseases and use this new information to support environmental public health action.

#### **Access the RFA (RFA-ES-09-001):**

<http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfa-files/RFA-ES-09-001.html>

#### **RFA Details**

This RFA solicits research applications designed to bring together community members and environmental and occupational health researchers to investigate the potential health risks of environmental and occupational exposures that are of concern to the community.

Research will focus on environmental or occupational agents known or strongly suspected to be a significant environmental public health issue by community members but lacking basic information on exposure levels, sources of exposure, or potential health effects. An education, outreach, prevention or intervention program(s) also must be developed to translate and disseminate research findings to relevant audiences (e.g., scientists, community members, healthcare professionals, and policymakers) to inform them about the potential health burden(s) associated with environmental or occupational agents in their community, with the ultimate goal of supporting actions that will lead to the prevention or reduction of harmful environmental/occupational exposures and improve human health. Evaluation will be a central component of all projects.

Applicants may request a project period of up to four years and a budget for direct costs of up to \$225,000 per year.

The NIEHS intends to commit \$2 million in FY2009 to fund five to seven new grants in response to this FOA. The NIOSH intends to commit \$500,000 in FY2009 to fund one to two new grants in response to this FOA.

**Applications are due April 1, 2009.** Prospective applicants are asked to submit a letter of intent (LOI) due March 1, 2009.

Peer Review Date(s): June 2009

Council Review Date(s): August 2009

Earliest Anticipated Start Date(s): September 30, 2009

#### **Questions?**

Caroline H. Dilworth, PhD -- Email: [dilworthch@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:dilworthch@niehs.nih.gov) (NIEHS)

Bernadine Kuchinski, Ph.D. -- Email: [bkuchinski@cdc.gov](mailto:bkuchinski@cdc.gov) (NIOSH)

## **Reports and Other Resources**

### **New Federal Report Urges Updating EPA Chemical Policies**

The United States Government Accountability Office has just issued a new report: "The Environmental Protection Agency: Major Management Challenges"

<http://www.gao.gov/products/GAO-09-434>

From the summary: "EPA has failed to develop sufficient chemical assessment information to limit public exposure to many chemicals that may pose substantial health risks. In January 2009, GAO added a new issue--the need to transform EPA's process for assessing and controlling toxic chemicals--to its list of high-risk areas warranting increased attention by Congress and the executive branch."

### **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](mailto:elise@healthandenvironment.org).

Best wishes,

Elise Miller, MEd, Director

Steve Heilig, Director of Public Health and Education at San Francisco Medical Society

Shelby Gonzalez, Administrative Coordinator Emeritus

Erika Sanders, Administrative Coordinator

Julia Varshavsky, Program Associate

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