

# **National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council Meeting**

## **Report of the Acting Deputy Director**

**September, 2009**

## Description of the Office of the Deputy Director

The responsibilities of the Office of the Deputy Director (ODD) are currently evolving under the Office of the Director (OD). The position has historically been structured to assist the Director in the formulation and implementation of plans and policies necessary to carry out the mission of the NIEHS and the National Toxicology Program (NTP). The Deputy Director works with the Director in the management of the NIEHS and NTP, speaks on behalf of the Institute, and represents the Institute and the Director in a variety of roles.

The Deputy Director also has a key role in program development at the Institute, especially in conceptualizing and preliminary implementation of initiatives that reflect OD priorities. Previous examples of these initiatives include development of the NIEHS/EPA Centers in Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research, and assistance with the Environmental Genome Project and the Exposure Biology Program. In addition, the Deputy Director participates for or with the Director in extramural outreach by reaching out to diverse constituencies, nationally and internationally, to rebuild existing ties and establish new ones.

Dr. Birnbaum has asked the Acting Deputy Director to evaluate specific roles that should be assumed in the ODD. This has led to a restructuring of the Office of Science Policy (OSP)/ Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation (OPPE) as described below, and identification of a Senior Advisor for International Activities (Sally Tinkle) and Senior Advisor for Environmental Public Health and the National Children's Study (Allen Dearry). The ODD maintains supervision of the NIEHS Library and the *Environmental Health Perspectives* journal.

Additional responsibilities undertaken by the Deputy Director include:

- NIEHS representative to the National Cancer Advisory Board (NCAB)
- Governance Committee for the Computer Technology Branch
- Chair, NIEHS Title 42 Committee
- Chair, Committee for Review of the Office of the Director Conference requests.

## **Activities since the last NAEHS council meeting**

### *Reorganization of the Office of Science Policy (OSP)/OPPE.*

Descriptions of the OSP/OPPE background and current activities are described in Appendix 1. Briefly, OSP/OPPE was developed to support the Director and other senior NIEHS staff in defining and interpreting NIEHS scientific programs and research to Congress, the public, and scientific and public health communities. OSP/OPPE coordinates NIEHS research and training planning activities and program analysis, tracking and reporting for the Government Performance Results Act (GPRA) and the Program Assessment Rating Tool (PART) and performs interagency liaison roles in a variety of subject matter areas. The Office develops protocols, working documents and agency statements on policy, legislation, the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA) and public outreach to NIH, the Congress, and public stakeholders. The OSP/OPPE serves as a liaison between NIEHS and Congressional staff, various government, health, and science agencies and organizations, promoting NIEHS collaboration with sister agencies and ensuring NIEHS accessibility and responsiveness to the U.S. public. The OSP/OPPE coordinates all documentary and oral testimony and responses for NIEHS on appropriations, legislation and policy. The Office collaborates and assists OCPL, DERT, DIR and NTP. Joyce Martin, J.D. served as the Director of OSP and Dr. Sheila Newton serves as the Director of OPPE, and for three years they managed OSP/OPPE staff. Since the last NAEHS council meeting, Joyce Martin left NIEHS to take a position in Washington, DC. After considerable discussion with Drs. Birnbaum, Kleeberger, and Newton, the OSP/OPPE is being reorganized. Consequently, the OSP has been discontinued, with Dr. Newton assuming leadership of many of the combined activities of the OSP and OPPE. For example, the FOIA officer (Kim Minneman) and the OSP Special Assistant (John Schelp) are now supervised by Dr. Newton. Additional changes in the staff and function of OPPE will be forthcoming.

### *Activities of the OPPE since the last NAEHS Council meeting*

- Preparation of the Biennial Report.

The Biennial Report is an important NIH-wide document, mandated by Congress in the 2006 NIH Reform Act. The ability of NIEHS to present its programs and scientific advances in this document is critically important to raising the profile of environmental health sciences in the eyes of Congress and the public. The first Biennial Report came out early this year and covered FY2006-2007. It can be found at [www.report.nih.gov/biennialreport/](http://www.report.nih.gov/biennialreport/). Over the past several months, staff from across the NIH have been engaged in writing the first draft of the FY2008-2009 document. The OPPE takes the overall NIEHS lead for the Biennial Report, both in establishing the NIH groundwork and in organizing the contribution of NIEHS to the Report.

Dr. Newton participated in trans-NIH discussions to outline the approach that would be taken to develop the document. Sheila and her staff covered all 15 Report Topic Teams (for the topics mandated by the legislation) so that each team would have substantive NIEHS representation across the wide variety of topics in the report (e.g., Cancer, Neurosciences, Autoimmune Diseases, Life Stages, Epidemiology, Genomics, Health Disparities, Training, etc.). They collected information on high-profile and compelling examples of NIEHS programs and scientific advances; assisted NIEHS leadership in prioritizing them to come up with a list of 15 as required; and edited each item to conform with the format. OPPE's work resulted in a comprehensive presentation of NIEHS research efforts within this very important and highly visible document.

- Strategic Plan for Doubling of the NIH Cancer Research Budget.

On May 19, the NIH initiated the development of a Strategic Plan for doubling of the NIH Cancer Research Budget. Dr. Raynard Kington (the Acting Director for NIH) asked Dr. John Niederhuber (NCI) and Dr. Steven Katz (NIAMS) to co-chair the planning effort. Points of contact (POC) for all of the ICs were identified, and Dr. Steven Kleeberger was named the NIEHS POC. Dr. Kleeberger worked closely with Dr. Newton to identify scientific opportunities for cancer research at NIEHS over the next 8 years. The NIEHS Plan was to assume a doubling of the NIEHS investment in cancer research based on the funding level indicated by the RCDC Budget estimate of FY2008. The Plan also required a description of how NIEHS would expand current major programs, identify new scientific projects, and develop collaborative opportunities between 2010 and 2017. Furthermore, the Plan was to include expected outcomes/progress for the funding period, a budget by mechanism to each major program or initiative, and identify whether the programs and initiatives are basic, translational, clinical or population-based. Submission of the proposed scientific Plan was due 27 May. Drs. Newton and Kleeberger worked closely with a number of personnel throughout NIEHS including Drs. Claudia Thompson and Gwen Collman (DERT), Drs. Trevor Archer and Dale Sandler (DIR), Dr. John Bucher (NTP), and Ms. Laurie Johnson (OM) to develop the NIEHS Plan. The first draft of the NIH Strategic Plan was distributed for comment on 8 June and the final draft of the Strategic Plan was delivered to Dr. Kington 19 June. The efforts of OPPE and NIEHS division staff led to the development of a comprehensive, thorough Plan for NIEHS that was represented strongly in the NIH Strategic Plan.

- Additional Activities.

In June, the new White House Office on Women and Girls ordered a report from across the Administration on all agency activities related to women and girls, specifying a format that

was not a very good fit for NIH activities. OPPE worked with NIH to understand what was needed and reported the information.

### *Senior Advisor for International Activities*

In June, the position of Senior Advisor for International Activities was created and Dr. Sally Tinkle agreed to assume the responsibilities of the position. Key to this position are maintaining international Institute activities as well as the identification and development of new international opportunities. Since the last NAEHS council meeting, Dr. Tinkle has begun to develop new international focus areas for NIEHS in order to promote the Institute research leadership internationally. As an important part of this process, Dr. Tinkle has been appointed NIEHS representative to the Fogarty International Center (FIC) Forum on International Health. This group of IC representatives meets bi-monthly to share ideas and information on NIH cross-cutting initiatives and international opportunities. Dr. Tinkle has also been appointed to the Trans-NIH Working Group on Global Health Research. This new working group is chaired by Roger Glass, Director, FIC, and will initially focus on developing a trans-NIH framework to assist ICs in planning and implementation of international partnerships and a database of NIH international activities. Dr. Tinkle has also been working with the NIEHS-WHO InterRegional Research Unit to determine how to better develop/promote our WHO collaboration, and has established contact with Pan American Health Organization (PAHO) to explore opportunities for environmental health research and policy collaboration.

Dr. Tinkle's expertise on nanomaterials health and safety will also continue to be critical to NIEHS as she represents the Institute on in-house and inter-agency initiatives. Dr. Tinkle has been the Nanomaterials Science Advisor to DERT on two Funding Opportunity Announcements (FOA) through the Recovery Act. She has also participated on the North Carolina Environmental Health Collaborative NanoSummit planning team. The workshop will be held Oct 8&9, 2009 at the NC Biotechnology Center and is entitled. "Environmentally Responsible Commercialization of Nanotechnology: Overcoming Barriers to Commercialization and Growth." Dr. Tinkle has also been invited to: co-chair the National Nanotechnology Initiative (NNI)'s Nanoscale Science, Engineering, and Technology Subcommittee (NSET) under the Committee on Technology, National Science and Technology Committee, Office of Science and Technology Policy, Executive Office of the President; Co-chair, a multi-sector planning team that will host a workshop on Nanomaterials and Human Health & Instrumentation, Metrology, and Analytical Methods on November 17 – 18, 2009 in Washington DC as part of ongoing responsibilities as the NNI/NSET Task Force Leader for Nanomaterials and Human Health; appointed to the US delegation to the US-EC High Level Regulatory Forum, Brussels July 24, 2009. The delegation was led by the Office of Information and Regulatory Affairs, Office of Management and Budget.

### *Senior Advisor for Environmental Public Health and the National Children's Study*

In June, the position of Senior Advisor for Environmental Public Health and the National Children's Study was created and Dr. Allen Dearry agreed to assume the responsibilities of the position. Over the past few months, Dr. Dearry has assumed the responsibility of rejuvenating NIEHS participation in the National Children's Study (NCS) and has excelled at this role. Importantly, he has worked to improve linkages between NIEHS and NICHD, and among NIH, EPA, HUD, and CDC to address significant NCS implementation issues. He has brought scientists and agencies together to assist with development of alternative designs for the NCS protocol. These efforts include input from NIEHS-EPA-funded Centers for Children's Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research, trans-NIH Exposure Biology Program, HUD Office of Healthy Homes, and from individual intramural scientists and health science administrators at NIEHS and EPA. Collectively, this work is providing much needed expertise on biological and environmental protocols for specific measures and methods from pregnancy to 18 months. Dr. Dearry's efforts are of broad, interagency significance in helping to ensure that the NCS design is cost effective and scientifically valid.

Dr. Dearry has also provided input to NIEHS leadership on environmental public health (EPH). He has identified opportunities for partnerships with other NIH ICs, other federal agencies, and NGOs. Further, he has maintained effective contacts with a wide variety of scientists, administrators, health professionals, community representatives, and others to address EPH issues related to NIEHS. Importantly, Dr. Dearry has represented NIH/DHHS on the Joint Subcommittee on Ocean Science and Technology (JSOST). He has attended bimonthly JSOST meetings, suggested "near term priority" focused on climate change-oceans-human health in conjunction with NOAA, and authored the update of "enhancing human health" societal theme for the national ocean research priority plan and implementation strategy.

### *Activities related to Environmental Health Perspectives.*

Under the leadership of Dr. Hugh Tilson, Editor, the *Environmental Health Perspectives* (EHP) journal has made a number of key steps forward since the last NAEHS Council meeting. Dr. Tilson has continued to provide outstanding leadership to EHP as demonstrated by filling key positions on the editorial staff of the journal (e.g. Dr. Jane Schroeder, Science Editor), and has developed an organizational structure that will guarantee continued development and growth. Dr. Tilson has also continued to build and make stronger the EHP Advisory Board, Board of Associate Editors, and Editorial Review Board. Further testament to the leadership of Dr. Tilson is the significant increase in the Impact Factor of EHP (6.123 with a 5-yr Impact Factor of 7.069) which is the second highest ranking of all journals in Public, Environmental & Occupational

Health. Dr. Tilson also demonstrated strong leadership when he convoked a Review Panel to consider possible violations of EHP policy as it related to the paper, "Elevated Lead in Drinking Water in Washington, DC 2003-2004: The Public Health Response [Guidotti T, et al. *Environ Health Perspect* 115:695-701 (2007)]. Please see Appendices 2 and 3. Dr. Tilson thus established a set of criteria for dealing with EHP policy and maintained the integrity of the journal and, further, provided a procedural example for other journals.

#### *Activities Related to the Library & Information Services Branch (LISB)*

Mr. Dav Robertson, Supervisory Librarian of the LISB, has continued to provide outstanding leadership of the LISB. For example, he chaired the Special Libraries Association (SLA) Centennial Commission and 2009 Conference Planning Committee. Three professional librarians and two student interns from NIEHS attended the conference, taking CE courses, attending programs and paper presentations, networking with others, and learning about new technology in the vendor exhibit hall. NIEHS benefited from Dav's active leadership role in SLA in several ways. First, staff are able to take training in leading edge technology and make networking contacts which enable us to deliver outstanding services to NIEHS scientists and policy makers. Second, in a leadership role, he was able to influence the content of the classes and conferences and ensure they meet the needs of our NIEHS (and NIH and DHHS) librarians. Third, he was able to put the NIEHS name in front of 11,000 international members of SLA and many more trade vendors who see this Institute in a dynamic and favorable light.

The LISB also held a half-day retreat in March (at Sigma Xi) where staff reviewed a consultant findings from the NIEHS information needs assessment conducted in the fall of 2008. The LISB staff explored options for promoting services, for succession planning and staffing, and for developing new initiatives. At a follow-up meeting, the options were consolidated and prioritized. The results will be used to revise the LISB strategic plan for the next three years. Consistent with the needs assessment and strategic plan, steps were taken to expand the bioinformatics component of LISB. A new position description was written and recruited for a scientist GS-14 Biologist (Bioinformatics). David Fargo, who was already on the staff, was selected. These steps will ensure continued development of the LISB and further the outstanding service to the NIEHS research community.

#### *Development of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the NIEHS and the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).*

Individuals from the NIEHS and EPA have met on a number of occasions to discuss the possibility of developing a MOU to establish and formalize a mutual desire and intent to strengthen and expand scientific collaboration between the two institutions. The MOU is

designed to promote scientific collaboration in the sharing of scientific resources to advance the goals and mandates of both organizations in the protection of human health and the environment.

The two organizations have complimentary expertise to bring to bear on environmental issues of mutual interest. These enhanced capabilities include, but are not limited to, performing cell and animal based effects studies, epidemiological investigations and human clinical research. In addition, both organizations collaborate extensively with a multitude of other organizations including sister Federal and state agencies, academia, non-governmental, and international organizations. The NIEHS and the EPA each have exceptional scientific resources. In combination, these resources have the potential to be leveraged to even greater benefit, helping to significantly advance the scientific missions of both organizations.

Subsequent to the official signing of the MOU (see Appendix 4), individual inter-agency agreements (IAG) will be written to describe more specifically the research that will be performed between the NIEHS and EPA. Initially, one IAG will be written to describe human studies (led by Dr. Darryl Zeldin) and another will be written to describe animal studies (led by Dr. Steven Kleeberger). It is anticipated that these IAGs will be the beginning of additional research initiatives that will take advantage of the mutual research strengths and expertise of both organizations.

## **List of Appendices**

Appendix 1. Background and responsibilities of the Office of Science Policy (OSP)/Office of Policy, Planning and Evaluation (OPPE).

Appendix 2. Charge to the Review Panel for *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Appendix 3. Report of the Review Panel for *Environmental Health Perspectives*.

Appendix 4. Draft memorandum of understanding (MOU) for scientific coordination and collaboration between the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) Office of Research and Development and the NIEHS.