

**NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)**  
**May 2015 – September 2015**

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**I. EVENTS**



**Virtual Forum: Near Roadway Pollution and Health.** OCPL worked closely with staff in DERT, OD, Office of Science Education, and contractors to successfully host the July 10 NIEHS [Virtual Forum](#): Near Roadway Pollution and Health. OCPL took the lead in responding to 315 emails and providing social media support before, during, and after the event. This included a live-tweeting session with quotes, statistics, and photos that were relayed to the public in real time via Twitter with the hashtag #RoadwayAir. A [Factor story](#) was also developed.



**Tar Heel of the Week.** Allen Wilcox, M.D., Ph.D., of DIR was selected by the North Carolina paper, the News and Observer, as Tar Heel of the Week. The paper has been bestowing this honor on North Carolina residents for 50 years. The reporter visited the NIEHS campus to interview Wilcox and highlighted his work and dedication in an August 1 article, "[Joy of discovery drives epidemiologist Allen Wilcox.](#)" A [Factor story](#) was also developed.



Photo by Raymond Thompson – West Virginia University researchers collect water samples at the confluence of the Elk and Kanawha Rivers.

**NTP and West Virginia Chemical Spill.** On June 16, NTP released the findings of its short-term toxicity studies related to the West Virginia Chemical spill. The findings were publicly released at the NTP Board of Scientific Counselors meeting, which was webcast. OCPL coordinated efforts between the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Services and the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention to develop a [press release](#) issued by West Virginia. A link to the press release was posted on NIEHS and [NTP](#) Web pages dedicated to study findings. OCPL also

worked with NTP to facilitate media interviews, develop content for dedicated Web pages, develop a [Factor story](#), and coordinate communication with other agencies.



**November 1, 2016 — NIEHS Celebrates 50 years of Environmental Health Research at NIH.** OCPL is taking the lead in planning NIEHS 50th anniversary events. A committee and seven subcommittees are meeting regularly to plan and implement a yearlong calendar of activities that will kick off January 21, 2016 and include a big celebration on November 1, 2016. NIEHS encourages all current and former

employees, members of Council, and those with knowledge of NIEHS's past, to join in documenting the institute's history, research highlights, public health impacts, milestones, and people who have shaped the institute over the past half century. A special Web page at [www.niehs.nih.gov/about/50years](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/50years) was set up by OCPL to solicit nominations. A [Factor story](#), as well as local media pitches and social media messages, were developed to encourage submissions.

## II. NEWS COVERAGE

### News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers, and Activities

May 2015 — 482 stories

June 2015 — 431 stories

July 2015 — 601 stories

August 2015 — 553 stories

#### Press Releases

August 26, NIEHS press release, "[Low-Level Arsenic Exposure Before Birth Associated with Early Puberty and Obesity in Female Mice](#)," featured work by Humphrey Yao, Ph.D., and his DIR colleagues published in **Environmental Health Perspectives**.

August 14, NIEHS press release, "[Newly Discovered Cells Restore Liver Damage in Mice Without Cancer Risk](#)," featured work by Superfund grantees in the journal **Cell**.

August 12, NIEHS posted a link to a press release, "[New UC Davis Environmental Research Center Links Science With Advocacy](#)," which highlighted the new center. The press release included a quote from Claudia Thompson, Ph.D., of DERT.

August 10, NIEHS issued a media availability to highlight a new paper in **Nature Medicine** by Dmitry Gordenin, Ph.D., of DIR and his collaborators. The release, "[NIEHS Scientists Identify the Immunity Proteins That Cause a Majority of DNA Damage in Several Types of Human Cancers](#)," discussed their discovery of a new mutation-causing enzyme.

August 10, NIEHS posted a link to the press release "[Life is but a DREAM](#)." The press release included a quote from Allen Dearry, Ph.D., of OD, and highlighted a paper in **Nature Biotechnology** that discussed the collaborative effort and findings that came from the DREAM Challenge launched by NIEHS and its partners in 2013.

July 27, NIEHS press release, "[Researchers Identify Protein in Mice That Helps Prepare for Healthy Egg-Sperm Union](#)," featured work by DIR scientist Carmen Williams, M.D., Ph.D., and her DIR colleagues.

July 10, NIEHS posted a press release, "[Could Hormone-Related Cancers Start Before Birth?](#)" which focused on research at University of Massachusetts Amherst investigating the role of estrogen-mimicking chemicals.

June 23, NIEHS posted a press release, "[UA College of Pharmacy Researchers Link Liver Disease and Drug Metabolism](#)," that highlighted an often undiagnosed liver disease.

June 16, NIEHS worked with the West Virginia Department of Health and Human Resources to issue and post the press release "[NTP Findings Consistent with Actions Taken During Chemical Spill](#)." The release included a quote from NTP Associate Director John Bucher, Ph.D.

#### Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

August 23, **the Durham Herald Sun** selected Terry Blankenship-Paris, D.V.M., of DIR, as their Volunteer of the Week for her work in helping to improve the life of animals in the region.

August 20, **BNA's Daily Environment Report** story, "Breast-Fed Infants Exposed to heat-resistant chemicals," included quotes from Kristina Thayer, Ph.D., of NTP.

August 19, a perspective piece in the **New England Journal of Medicine**, “GMOs, herbicides, and public health,” authored by NIEHS grantees Phillip Landrigan, M.D., and Charles Benbrook, Ph.D., mentioned NTP.

August 19, the **News and Observer** featured a full page story, “UNC scientists trace autism ‘pathway’ from gene to brain,” which included quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D.

August 18, **Republican Online** highlighted an NIEHS grant recipient in the story “UMass professor awarded \$419,000 grant to study the gene’s role in infertility, Alzheimer’s.”

August 14, **BNA’s Daily Environment Report** story, “NTP analyzing perfluorinated chemicals’ immune effects,” highlighted a new request for information on this topic.

August 14, the **Chronicle of Higher Education** story, “A clinician, a blogger, and now a thorn in Coca-Cola’s side,” included quotes from David Resnik, J.D., Ph.D., of DIR.

August 12, **BNA’s Daily Environment Report** story, “DOD urged to work on predictive toxicity capacities,” highlighted an upcoming NTP meeting on alternatives to acute systematic toxicity testing.

August 10, the **Wall Street Journal** story, “Burning question: is it safe to use DEET to ward off bugs?” featured an interview with Chris Weis, Ph.D., of OD.

August 5, the **Charleston Daily Mail** story, “Latest MCHM test results raise more questions,” focused on NTP findings from studies related to the West Virginia chemical spill.

August 2, the **News and Observer** named Wilcox as Tar Heel of the Week, in the [story](#), “Tar Heel: Joy of discovery drives epidemiologist Allen Wilcox. “

July 27, a story in **Duke Today**, “Chemicals in house dust may trigger receptor linked to obesity,” focused on work supported by NIEHS.

July 22, **BNA’s Daily Environment Report** reports “Cobalt compounds predicted to cause cancer,” which highlighted work being done by the NTP.

July 8, the **Health Day** story “Asbestos found in kids' crayons, toy kits: report,” included quotes from Weis.

July 1, **Chemical Watch** reports “Experts endorse Parma consensus on ‘metabolic disruptors.’” The story included quotes from Jerry Heindel, Ph.D., of DERT.

July 1, the **LA Times** wrote a story “Combinations of ‘safe’ chemicals may increase cancer risk, study suggests,” which included quotes from Birnbaum.

June 26, **Science** magazine wrote a story for its career section, “What happens after a retraction?” The story included quotes from Resnik.

June 24, **WebMD** wrote a story, “Can the ‘chemical soup’ we live in cause cancer?” The story included quotes from Birnbaum.

June 22, the **Durham Herald-Sun** highlighted DIR researcher Xiaolong Li, Ph.D., in the story “NIEHS researcher receives tenure.”

June 20, the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** wrote “Coffee roasters' health at risk from chemical compound, air samples suggest.” The story included quotes from Dan Morgan, Ph.D., of NTP.

June 18, the **Charleston Daily Mail** wrote “Study answers questions about MCHM.” The story highlights work of the NTP. A June 16 Daily Mail story, “Feds say MCHM not likely to have adverse health effects,” included quotes from John Bucher, Ph.D., of NTP.

June 17, the **State Journal** wrote “Feds: new studies back water decisions after chemical spill.” The story highlighted work of NTP.

June 16, a story in the **Charleston Gazette**, “Feds say spill chemicals toxic only at higher levels,” included quotes from Bucher.

June 16, **MetroNews** wrote a story “New study results show ‘long-term health effects’ not expected from MCHM spill water emergency.” Bucher and West Virginia health officials were quoted.

June 16, the **State Journal** wrote “New toxicology report: MCHM levels from Elk River spill safe.” The story included quotes from Bucher.

June 16, **Targeted News Service** reported “Manchin pleased with chemical spill study results.” The story discussed NTP efforts related to the chemical spill in West Virginia.

June 15, the **New York Times** wrote a story “Facing consumer pressure, companies start to seek safe alternatives to BPA.” The story included quotes from Bucher.

June 9, the **Newsminer** of Alaska wrote about NTP efforts related to sulfolane in its story “DEC delays setting cleanup standards until sulfolane study complete.”

May 29, **BNA’s Daily Environment Report** wrote “Federal scientists update interagency panel on alternative toxicity test advancements.” The story included quotes from Nigel Walker, Ph.D., of NTP.

May 27, **Med Page Today** wrote, “Air purifiers help lungs and heart.” The story included quotes from Darryl Zeldin, M.D., of DIR.

May 14, **Eyewitness News This Morning** reported “Study finds MCHM more toxic than thought; expert says results don’t apply to WV.” The story included references to NTP studies.

May 3, the **New York Times** wrote a story “A flame retardant that came with its own threat to health.” The story included quotes from Birnbaum.

### III. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

#### NIEHS Social Media Efforts

In accordance with popular trends, NIEHS continues to expand its use of social media in an effort to reach new audiences with its environmental health message. At present, NIEHS posts content through the following platforms:

- Facebook (targeted to a more general audience)
- Twitter (targeted to both the general public and science community)
- Google + (targeted to the general public)
- LinkedIn (targeted primarily to those in the environmental health career field)

#### Growth Trends

The summer months of 2015 saw continued growth in NIEHS social media followership. From May 1 to August 1, the NIEHS Twitter feed (@NIEHS) increased by an average of 100 followers per month, bringing its total number of followers to more than 11,500.

During that time, the NIEHS Facebook page increased an average of 165 “likes” per month, bringing its total followership to 9,513.

The NIEHS Google + and LinkedIn pages are still relatively new, though both have seen steady gains since their launch in late 2014. LinkedIn currently has 1,266 followers and Google + has 6,883 page views.

#### 2015 NIEHS Virtual Forum: Near Roadway Pollution and Health – Official Hashtag #RoadwayAir

OCPL contributed email, web, and social media support for this year’s NIEHS virtual forum, “Near Roadway Pollution and Health.” For example, OCPL promoted the event on all NIEHS social media networks, including Facebook, Twitter, Google +, and LinkedIn and coordinated with subject matter experts throughout the forum to produce and deliver live tweets in real time to NIEHS followers on Twitter.

#### *Live Tweet Twitter Metrics*

Number of Tweets	Total Impressions	Total Engagements
15	8,050	39

Impressions — Possible users who may see the content, either directly through the NIEHS Twitter feed or through the feeds of others whom they follow that might retweet or favorite NIEHS content.

Engagements — Users who directly interact with NIEHS content, be it through favorites, retweeting, or page clicks, i.e., clicking on the link embedded in a tweet.

*Most Popular tweet during the forum — Linda Birnbaum*

Tweet activity ×

**NIEHS @NIEHS**  
 Birnbaum: "There are 12 robust studies now that show a connection between ambient air pollution and autism spectrum disorder." [#RoadwayAir](#)

**Reach a bigger audience**  
 Get more engagements by promoting this Tweet!

**Get started**

Impressions	1,011
Total engagements	16
Retweets	7
Detail expands	4
Favorites	2
Hashtag clicks	2
Profile clicks	1

### Other social media highlights

*Scholars Connect LinkedIn Group* — At the request of program leaders, OCPL designed, drafted, and launched a personalized LinkedIn group for the NIEHS Scholars Connect Program. This will serve as a networking platform for participants wishing to stay connected and share ideas, as well as a tool to aid administrators in sharing news and info about the program or career opportunities in which students can get involved.

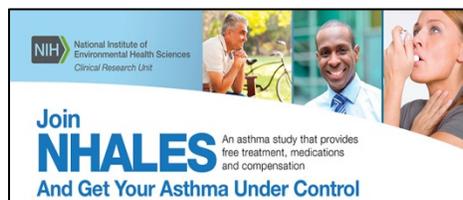
*Tweeting the NTP* — NIEHS continued its use of the official National Toxicology Program hashtag (#NTP\_NIEHS) in an effort to better track NTP coverage on Twitter. From May 1 through August 1, the NTP hashtag was used 35 times for a maximum impression rate of 1,200,630.

*Tweeting the Factor* — NIEHS continued to grow readership for the institute’s newsletter, the *Environmental Factor*, by tagging related tweets with the hashtag, #EnvironmentalFactor. From May 1 through August 1, this hashtag was posted 141 times for a maximum impression rate of 1,018,430.

### Web and Materials Development

OCPL has developed new [obesity](#) and [obesogens](#) Web pages.

### Patient Recruitment for Clinical Studies



OCPL works closely with staff at the NIEHS Clinical Research Unit to recruit patients for studies. Outreach materials for the Natural History of Asthma with Longitudinal Environmental Sampling study, or NHALES, will help scientists understand how the environment affects asthma symptoms. A [Factor](#) story, stories sent to local media, and social media outreach are all being used to recruit patients. OCPL is also working to recruit women in North Carolina for a clinical study on black cohosh, a dietary supplement used by many women. Posters, a [Factor](#) story, and other tools are being used to recruit for this study.

## Training

OCPL worked with a national training team to provide two half-day media coaching sessions August 4 for nine NIEHS scientists. The training was tailored to the needs of each spokesperson. It provided them with the skills and confidence they need to communicate their science findings. Feedback from attendees was very positive.

OCPL staff members were active participants and communicators in the NIEHS Active Shooter Exercise on June 17. The exercise was geared toward helping NIEHS and its employees respond to crisis situations. Two OCPL staff members and the OCPL director also participated in the Continuity of Operations exercise that followed, as well as a debriefing. A [Factor](#) story was developed to describe the daylong exercise.

## New OCPL staff member



Virginia (Ginger) Guidry, Ph.D., joined OCPL on June 15. Guidry was a Science Communications Fellow at Environmental Health Sciences where she worked with the editor and other journalists to cultivate her natural talent for writing and public speaking. She earned her doctorate and completed her postdoc in epidemiology at UNC Chapel Hill. She also holds a master's in maternal and child health from UNC Chapel Hill, and a bachelor's degree in medical technology from the University of Delaware. Guidry will provide communications support for DERT. She will also assist with the institute's growing social media presence, and will work with the larger communications team to raise awareness of all NIEHS research and programs.

## Online Newsletter

The NIEHS monthly online newsletter, the [Environmental Factor \(Factor\)](#), highlights NIEHS research, staff accomplishments, and ongoing activities. Many of the stories in the Factor are selected and used by other publications, including the **NIH Record**, **NIH Catalyst**, **NIH Research Matters**, **NTP Update**, and others. A few examples are illustrated below.

- August, **NIH Record**, "[NIEHS Celebrates Wilson's Mentoring Award](#)"
- July-August, **The NIH Catalyst**, "[Colleagues: Recently Tenured - Xiaoling Li, Ph.D., NIEHS](#)"
- May-June, **The NIH Catalyst**, "[Responding to Environmental Cues Requires Cross-Talk Between Signal Transduction and Transcription](#)"

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