

NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)
May – September 2010

CONTENTS

- I. EVENTS
- II. NEWS COVERAGE
- III. PUBLIC INFORMATION, OUTREACH AND TRAINING

I. EVENTS

Oil Spill Response Efforts. Within days of the Deep Water Horizon explosion in the Gulf, NIEHS was on the scene assisting with safety training for cleanup workers. Behind the scenes, OCPL has been working with the Worker Education and Training Program (WETP) and others throughout NIEHS to develop and disseminate user friendly information to protect the health and safety of workers cleaning up the oil spill, and to share information about the breadth of materials available. OCPL has also filled a lead role in coordinating NIEHS activities with NIH, HHS, other agencies, and the White House; interacting with the media; and helping to prepare messaging materials for Congress, researchers, workers, the public, and other stakeholders about NIEHS efforts. Some key outreach activities included:

- Developed dedicated web pages and prominently placed them on the front of the NIEHS Web site with a series of graphics (<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/programs/gulfspill.cfm>).
- Developed logos and designs for the launch of the new epidemiology study.
- Hosted the first in a series of webinars on August 17, 2010, to obtain input from the Gulf region community and research stakeholders on the design of the proposed Gulf Worker Study following the recent Deepwater Horizon oil spill. More than 140 individuals participated. The next webinar is scheduled for September 15.
- Played a lead agency role in coordinating a July 10, 2010 visit by HHS Secretary Kathleen Sebelius to an NIEHS WETP grantee at Dillard University. See NIEHS news story at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2010/august/spotlight-grantees.cfm>.
- On May 28, 2010, NIEHS DERT Acting Director Gwen Collman represented NIEHS and participated in a press call organized by the White House. Other HHS participants included Secretary Sebelius. Collman discussed the role NIEHS was playing in training workers.
- More than 150 media stories related to the Gulf oil spill included mentions of NIEHS or NTP. Some key examples include:
 - The August 11, 2010 issue of **JAMA** featured a news story entitled “Experts focus on identifying, mitigating potential health effects of Gulf oil leak.” The story included quotes from Aubrey Miller of NIEHS OD and a mention of the epidemiology study to be led by NIEHS.
 - On August 8, 2010, NIEHS-supported WETP trainers were highlighted in a story by **The Lowell Sun** for their efforts in the Gulf.

- o The August 6, 2010 issue of the **Canadian Medical Association Journal** included a news story entitled “Gulf oil spill exposes gaps in knowledge as US assesses long-term health effects,” which includes information provided by Aubrey Miller of NIEHS OD.
- o In June 2010, six representatives from NIEHS participated in the Institute of Medicine Workshop convened by the HHS Secretary. NIEHS participation was mentioned in several media outlets, including **The Times-Picayune**, and a story in **Bloomberg Business Week** featured quotes from former NIEHS Director Ken Olden.
- o On June 15, 2010, **CNN** featured a story entitled “Oil spill poses health threats, but seafood on market is safe.” Aubrey Miller of NIEHS OD is quoted. **Gannet Washington Bureau** and **Pro Publica** also ran similar stories.
- o On June 2, 2010, WETP Director Chip Hughes talked to **NPR** for inclusion in a story entitled “Oil cleanup dirty, not toxic, for workers.”
- o On May 27, 2010, **The Washington Post** ran a story entitled “Illnesses among workers highlight concerns about health risks of oil cleanup.” NIEHS WETP efforts were highlighted.
- o On May 19, 2010, stories ran in many of the **McClatchy**-owned newspapers. “Oil Spill Details Are Held Tightly” was the title of the story that ran in the **News and Observer**. Chip Hughes of DERT was quoted.
- o On May 19, 2010, NIEHS worked with U.S. Department of Labor to issue a press release that was picked up by several media outlets, including **ABC** in Florida, highlighting the availability of materials to protect workers cleaning up the oil spill. The NIEHS Director was quoted.
- o On May 17, 2010, **The Huffington Post** ran a story including a quote by both the NIEHS Director and the WETP Director.

Promoting Toxicity Testing Memorandum of Understanding. In July 2010, FDA joined an interagency agreement that began in 2008 between NIEHS/NTP, EPA, and the NIH Chemical Genomics Center, as part of the Tox21 collaboration. Tox21 merges federal agency resources (research, funding, and testing tools) to develop ways to more effectively predict how chemicals will affect human health and the environment. NIEHS OCPL worked with the other agencies to promote this new partnership. In addition to developing a joint press release, new web pages were developed, and a story was written for the NIEHS online newsletter (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2010/august/science-partner.cfm>). Media coverage included stories in **Genome Web**, **Chemical and Engineering News**, **Chemical Online**, and **Federal News Radio**.

Gearing up for 50th Anniversary of SOT. NIEHS and NTP are helping the Society of Toxicology (SOT) mark its 50th anniversary next year with a special poster, banner, and Web site commemorating "Benchmarks in Toxicology." The online process at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/highlight/sot/2011-benchmarks.cfm> allows individuals to nominate or vote for the most important people, events, and discoveries that have influenced the modern discipline of toxicology. OCPL is also planning a follow-up to its successful **Live at SOT** campaign that was launched last year for the 2011 meeting.

Visit by NIH Director on May 11, 2010. OCPL worked closely with NIH/OD and staff at NIEHS, to coordinate and promote a visit by NIH Director Francis Collins, M.D., Ph.D. Materials were developed to invite staff to meet Dr. Collins and to hear his remarks at an all-hands meeting. A tour of the NIEHS facilities for Dr. Collins was organized by the OCPL director. A story was developed for the NIEHS newsletter (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2010/june/spotlight-collins.cfm>).

NIEHS/NTP Director Presents Vision for Institute. In May 2010, OCPL worked closely with the NIEHS director and senior staff to create awareness, and encourage attendance and participation, in a talk given by the director outlining her vision for NIEHS/NTP. Arrangements were made for a public webcast. Posters and other promotional materials were developed to get the word out. A story was developed for the Environmental Factor providing an overview of the presentation (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2010/june/spotlight-strategic.cfm>).

II. NEWS COVERAGE

Total News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers, and Activities

In May 2010, NIEHS was cited in 513 news stories.

In June 2010, NIEHS was cited in 583 news stories.

In July 2010, NIEHS was cited in 367 news stories.

In August 2010, NIEHS was cited in 202 news stories (as of August 18).

Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

A press release issued by NIEHS on August 16, 2010 entitled “[New Breast Cancer Committee to Establish Federal Research Agenda](#)” resulted in several media stories, including an interview with DERT’s Gwen Collman for **Reuters**.

On August 9, 2010, the **USA Today** story “Your health: Air pollution affects brain, heart, blood vessels” included quotes from Stephanie London of DIR.

In August 2010, numerous stories, including **KQED Radio**, **Med Page Today**, and others highlighted findings published in Pediatrics by NIEHS grantees showing puberty differences in young girls.

The August 5, 2010 issue of **Newsweek** included a story entitled “Will This Phone Kill You?” which included information about the ongoing NTP cell phone studies.

On August 2, 2010, stories in **Science News**, and a later **Science Friday** podcast about BPA in store receipts by the **Science News** senior editor on **NPR**, focuses on several news studies showing that BPA, used to make thermal paper such as cash register receipts, may pose a health risk. NTP’s Kris Thayer did several interviews on this topic, including the **LA Times** and **Science News**.

A July 26, 2010 story in **Environmental Health News** entitled “Urban air pollutants may damage IQs before baby’s first breath, scientists say” included quotes from Negin Martin of DIR.

On June 29, 2010, a **Washington Post** story entitled “Cellphone Industry Attacks San Francisco’s Ruling on Radiation” included information about the ongoing NTP cell phone studies. John Bucher of NTP is quoted.

On June 28, 2010, a story in **Insurance News and Markets** highlighted the work of DIR Scientist David Miller. The story, “Alzheimer’s disease can be controlled by butting the blood-brain barrier – NIEHS” plays off an NIEHS press release issued in April entitled “[Targeting the Blood-Brain Barrier May Delay Progression of Alzheimer’s Disease.](#)”

The June 23, 2010 online issue of **Nature News** ran a story entitled “The Genome’s Shield from Sunlight” that included quotes from Tom Kunkel of DIR.

On June 22, 2010, MSN Health and Fitness interviewed NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum for a story on NIEHS climate change efforts entitled “Are you ready? Experts warn of 11 climate-change health threats.”

A June 21, 2010 story in **Environmental Health News** entitled “Flame retardants can alter thyroid hormones in pregnant women, new study shows” includes quotes from NIEHS Director Birnbaum.

On June 21, 2010, OCPL worked with an investigator in DIR to develop a press release entitled, “[NIH-Supported Study Finds Novel Pathway May Open Doors for New Blood Pressure Treatments](#),” which received attention from media outlets such as **R&D Magazine**, **NIH Radio**, and others.

In June 2010, numerous stories on an NTP-supported finding about a chemical in sunscreen called retinal palmitate and its link to skin cancer received attention from numerous media outlets, including **Reuters** and **Fort Wayne News Sentinel**.

On June 10, 2010, a **Salon.com** article entitled “The poison crib: When protective chemicals harm” included quotes by grantees and by NIEHS/NTP Director Birnbaum.

The June 2010 issue of **Engineer Live** featured a story entitled “Nanoparticle Initiative to tackle safety fears” that highlighted the work of NIEHS in the engineered nanomaterials area. Sri Nadadur of DERT was quoted.

The June 2010 issue of **Nature Medicine** ran a story entitled “When natural disasters strike, tragedy can unfold in the lab” which included several quotes from William Stokes of NTP.

On May 31, 2010, **The New Yorker** magazine ran a lengthy piece entitled “The plastic panic: How worried should we be about everyday chemicals?” The piece includes several quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

On May 23, 2010, the television news show **60 Minutes** aired a segment about phthalates that featured NIEHS grantee Shanna Swan. The “Phthalates: Are they safe?” segment can be viewed at <http://www.cbsnews.com/video/watch/?id=6512528n>.

On May 12, 2010 a story appeared in **Science News** entitled “Another Plastics Ingredient Raises Safety Concerns.” The story talks about the studies to be undertaken by NTP on the chemical BPAF.

On May 14, a story in the **Philadelphia Inquirer** entitled “Germs in Hiding” included an interview with Darryl Zeldin of DIR about germs throughout your home.

During the week of May 10, 2010, **NBC** featured a story entitled “Special Report: 85 Percent of Homes Have Detectable Dust Mites” that focused on dust mite interventions and the work that Darryl Zeldin, NIEHS acting clinical director, does in this area. The piece was filmed in the NIEHS Bethesda office. The clip can be found at <http://mync.com/site/51412/>.

On May 6, 2010, both the **Raleigh and Charlotte News and Observer** included a story entitled “Report Warns of Global Warming Costs” about the release of an NIH-led paper on climate change and health. Former NIEHS Senior Advisor Chris Portier was interviewed and quoted in the story.

In May 2010, **Newsweek** featured a story entitled “Shopping for cancer?” that included information about the impact of environmental factors on cancer. NIEHS/NTP research findings on chemicals were mentioned.

Several stories in May 2010 mentioned NTP’s evaluation of BPA, including **The Atlantic**, **MedPage Today**, **Stats**, and **CNN**.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION, OUTREACH AND TRAINING

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). OCPL continues to work with DERT and grantees to update the NIEHS Web pages on the American Recovery and Reinvestment Act of 2009. The pages showcase how NIEHS’s support of 346 grants in 42 states is accelerating research in critical environmental health areas. The Web pages can be viewed at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/recovery/index.cfm>. Seven new ARRA success stories were added in July 2010. A story was also developed and disseminated in the NIEHS online newsletter (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2010/august/spotlight-profiling.cfm>).

Public Inquiries. OCPL responded to approximately 100-150 public inquiries per month since May 2010, received by phone, mail, and e-mail. The questions range from concerns about electromagnetic fields (EMFs) to requests for educational materials or referrals to environmental health clinics. OCPL staff also conducts tours of the Institute for members of the public. In July 2010, 50 high school students and 15 college interns toured the campus with OCPL staff.

Online Newsletter. Increasing the readership of the NIEHS monthly online newsletter, the Environmental Factor, is a top priority for OCPL. The newsletter highlights NIEHS research, staff accomplishments, and ongoing activities. Each month, the newsletter contains more than 30 articles. Several new features continue to be added to the newsletter, including videos, as well as a “Share” feature, which allows readers to more easily share news with colleagues and friends. The newsletter also provides career development opportunities for NIEHS postdoctoral fellows and employees from other parts of the Institute, by allowing them to be guest writers for the publication. Many of the stories in the e-Factor are often selected and used in other outreach outlets, including the **NIH Record**, **NIH Catalyst**, **NTP Update**, and others (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/index.cfm>).

Web Pages. OCPL coordinates the development, review, and placement of all Web content. Last year, NIEHS Web pages were viewed over 8 million times. Some Web highlights include:

- Gulf Oil Spill Response pages were added as a resource on the NIEHS Web site in late April 2010. Pages continue to be updated on a regular basis. The latest information is available at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/programs/gulfspill.cfm>.
- Gulf Worker Study webinars designed to get community input are housed on the NIEHS web site at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/programs/gulfworkerstudy.cfm>.
- Benchmarks in Toxicology nomination process is available at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/highlight/sot/2011-benchmarks.cfm>.
- A new health topics page on cell phones was developed. Audio clips were also added. <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/topics/agents/cellphones/index.cfm>
- In addition to developing and maintaining the public Web site, OCPL is playing an active role in the redesign of the Intranet, or internal web site, used by NIEHS staff.

Outreach and Materials Support. OCPL took the lead in staffing the NIEHS exhibit at the Endocrine Society’s 92nd annual meeting and expo June 19-22 in San Diego. New materials were developed for the meeting, including a new fact sheet on endocrine disruptors and a bibliography of current literature (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/docs/endocrine-disruptors-2010.pdf>).

Writing and Media Training. OCPL is planning to offer two training sessions this fall. A one day news writing course will provide post docs and others writers for the NIEHS newsletter a chance to learn basic journalism skills. A personally tailored media training session will provide key spokespeople with the confidence and skills they need to handle media interviews.

NIEHS/NTP Design Updates. New modern signage, denoting the home of the NIEHS/NTP, was unveiled this summer. The new signs appear at the T.W. Alexander Drive entrance to campus, on the front of the Rall building, and throughout the campus for directional guidance. The signs welcome visitors and staff to the world headquarters of cutting-edge environmental public health research. A newly designed NIEHS/NTP graphic display, depicting NIEHS/NTP areas of research emphasis, was also developed and placed at the NIH campus in Bethesda.

Christine Bruske Flowers

Director, Office of Communications and Public Liaison
National Institute of Environmental Health Science
National Institutes of Health
919-541-3665

Robin Mackar
News Director, Office of Communications and Public Liaison