

NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)
May – September 2011

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I. EVENTS

Release of the 12th Report on Carcinogens

On Friday, June 10, NIEHS/NTP released the 12th Report on Carcinogens (RoC). The release and communications plan were coordinated with HHS, other federal partners, and public stakeholder groups. The Report is a science-based document that identifies chemicals and biological agents that represent cancer hazards. Eight new substances have been added in this edition of the Report on Carcinogens. The Report is available at <http://ntp.niehs.nih.gov/go/roc12>.

NIEHS/NTP hosted a media teleconference to answer questions about the report. NTP Associate Director John Bucher served as lead spokesperson. More than 100 people participated in the call. OCPL worked with NIEHS/NTP staff to develop [new web pages](#) and information that could be easily used by the public, including five fact sheets, a press release, media advisory, and questions and answers. There were more than 16,000 downloads of RoC-related pdfs within the first two hours of release.

The release of the RoC resulted in more than 500 stories. Examples of media coverage prior to and after the release include:

- **ICIS.com** reported “Insight: US poised to label styrene as a likely carcinogen” on May 19.
- **TriCities.Com** and several local industry outlets reported on efforts to request HHS and Congress to delay the release of the RoC the first week of June.
- **Bloomberg News** reported “Chemical used in food containers added to U.S. list of carcinogens by NIH” on June 10. Bucher is quoted.
- **Huffington Post** reported “Formaldehyde, styrene added to U.S. Health Department’s carcinogens list.” NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum is quoted.
- **The New York Times** reported “U.S. weighs risk of styrene and formaldehyde.”
- **Trade Only Today** reported “Government lists styrene as a carcinogen.”
- **UPI** reported “Formaldehyde listed as human carcinogen.”
- **Web MD** wrote “U.S. adds 8 chemicals – some common – to carcinogen list.” Bucher is quoted.
- **Raleigh News and Observer** reported “Formaldehyde, styrene put on cancer list.” Bucher is quoted.

- **Chemical & Engineering News** reported June 13 that “Formaldehyde, styrene added to cancer warning list.” Bucher is quoted.
- **CNN Health** reported “Formaldehyde among substances added to cancer list.”
- **Pesticides and Toxic Chemical News** wrote June 15 “Styrene group sues to remove chemical from latest NTP Report on Carcinogens.”
- **Washington Post** and hundreds of other media outlets carried an **Associated Press** story about “Cancer of the psyche: People must weigh news of risks from cellphones to coffee to Styrofoam.” Birnbaum is quoted.
- **Pump Handle** reported June 22 “Department of Health and Human Services releases 12th Report on Carcinogens, adding formaldehyde and styrene to the list.” Bucher is quoted.
- **National Resources Defense Council staff blog “Switchboard”** discussed June 25 the RoC and chemical reform.
- **IPMD.net** reported “US Dept of Health and Human Services report identifies tungsten carbide-cobalt as carcinogen.” Birnbaum is quoted.
- **Reuters** interviewed Bucher for a July 13 story titled “After styrene warning, concern about who’s at risk.”
- An opinion piece in **The New York Times** July 16 discussed the RoC in a Sunday review article titled “Patrolling cancer’s borderlands.”

Strategic Planning Process Support

OCPL continues to play an integral role in the NIEHS strategic planning process that will help set the institute’s scientific and governance direction for the next five years (2012-2017). The OCPL director is a member of the strategic planning core team that is overseeing the process. Some recent OCPL efforts related to the plan include:

- Updating the strategic plan website
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/strategicplan/index.cfm>.
- Organizing and participating in the July 12-14 Stakeholder Community Workshop.
- Developing stories for the online newsletter. For example, the August issue includes “[NIEHS takes next step in strategic planning](#).”

Roundtable with Congressman Price and Local Researchers

On August 29, NIEHS will host a roundtable discussion with NIEHS staff, community members, research partners, and local media on the economic benefits of federally-funded research in the Triangle.

Panel members include Birnbaum; Rep. David Price (D-NC); John Hollingsworth, Duke University; Heather Patisaul, North Carolina State University; Charles Rodes, RTI International; and James Swenberg, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

Rose Hoban, a local health reporter from National Public Radio, will serve as moderator. Media will have a Q&A session with Price and Birnbaum prior to the roundtable.

Continuing Response to Gulf Oil Spill

OCPL continues to work with the GuLF STUDY team on messaging and recruitment efforts. The GuLF STUDY is a health study specifically for people who helped clean up the Deepwater Horizon Gulf oil spill. The study leaders and OCPL director are gearing up for a 5-stop regional media tour to increase recruitment efforts. Several media outlets continue to write about the study, including:

- **Durham News Herald** wrote June 20 “Oil spill illness survey under way,” which includes quotes from Dale Sandler of DIR.
- **Radio Station 1420 AM** in Florida included an interview with Lawrence Engel of DIR June 22 discussing the GuLF STUDY.
- **Montgomery Advertiser** reported June 26 “Gulf oil spill cleanup workers report medical problems; lawsuit filed.” Lead NIEHS researcher for the study, Sandler, is quoted in article.

Efforts also continue to promote grantee work in the Gulf, including highlighting the new grants funded as part of the [Deepwater Horizon Research Consortia](#) network.

II. NEWS COVERAGE

Total News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers, and Activities

May — 401 stories

June — 825 stories

July — 537 stories

August — 245 stories (as of August 15)

Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

A May 2 web-based story on **CNN Health** entitled “Prenatal exposure to BPA may cause wheezing in infants” highlighted research and recommendations made by NIEHS/NTP to reduce exposure to BPA.

A coordinated press release led by NIEHS on May 3 titled “World Asthma Day: NIH research advances help people with asthma” highlighted NIH efforts to reduce the burden of asthma. The release was featured on the **HHS homepage** and resulted in some follow-up stories about NIEHS’s portfolio.

Woman’s World magazine interviewed DIR researcher Honglei Chen about his research on diabetes and vitamins for their “Ask the Doctor” section May 2.

On May 13, **The New York Times** reported that “Agencies hope robot can speed toxics evaluations, end animal testing,” which discusses the role that NIEHS/NTP plays in Tox21. **Genome Web** also featured agency efforts in June.

CBS Evening News featured Birnbaum in a story aired May 17 on “Hidden dangers in baby products.” **Environmental Health News** and **Chemical & Engineering News** also developed stories that included quotes from Birnbaum on the new NIEHS-supported study on flame retardants.

A May 18 story in **The New York Times** titled “As an insecticide makes a comeback, Uganda must weigh its costs” references research conducted by NIEHS on DDT.

A commentary by James Huff of OD titled “Primary prevention of cancer” appeared in **Science** May 20.

NIEHS worked with the UC Davis MIND Institute in May to promote a new NIEHS-supported research paper titled “[Women who start prenatal vitamins early are less likely to have children with autism.](#)”

The May 27 issue of the **NIH Record** (bi-weekly NIH employee newsletter) included three stories about NIEHS researchers and activities:

- Conference on toxicogenomics, environmental sciences, Sept. 15-16 in Chapel Hill, NC
- Hogan to give Rodbell lecture at NIEHS
- Kissling to receive American Statistical Association honor

On May 30, **Food Consumer** magazine featured efforts by NIEH/NTP to highlight new Aloe vera findings. The article “Aloe vera may boost cancer risk – new evidence” pulled information from new NIEHS/NTP materials, including a video of Nigel Walker of NTP.

Food Consumer magazine also featured new findings from the NIEHS/NTP on acrylamide in an article titled, “New evidence suggests acrylamide can cause cancer.”

The May 31 issue of **American Health and Beauty** quoted biologist Retha Newbold in an article titled “Is too much soy dangerous?”

NIEHS collaborated with NCI in June to issue a statement on new cell phone findings that come out of the World Health Organization’s International Agency for Research on Cancer.

Microwave News is amongst the media outlets that focused on the new findings.

On June 2, **The Atlantic** included a story entitled “The Toxins in baby products (and almost everywhere else)” that includes quotes from an article authored by Birnbaum.

U.S. News and World Report and **Health Day News** reported June 6 on findings from DIR researcher Honglei Chen. “Parkinson’s disease may boost melanoma risk: Study” quotes Chen.

On June 7, the Raleigh **News and Observer** highlighted results from a new study reported in Environmental Health Perspectives on NIEHS-supported research on BPA.

PBS Newshour featured BPA findings on June 27. The story “Study: BPA makes male mice less masculine” includes quotes from Newbold.

Voice of America featured NIEHS DIR researcher and Acting Clinical Director Darryl Zeldin in a video and story June 13 focusing on “Climate change: Good for weeds, bad for allergies.”

On June 20, the **Environmental Working Group** featured findings presented by the NIEHS/NTP on retinyl palmitate. The story, titled “What scientists say about vitamin A in sunscreen” includes information presented at an NTP meeting in January.

European Business Press reported “Nanotubes not toxic, researchers say” in a story June 20 that highlights findings from NIEHS-supported grantees.

In June, the **British Medical Journal** developed a story titled “Environmentalists seek to set research agenda on indoor air pollution” that focused on a workshop hosted by several NIH institutes and partners on cookstoves and other indoor air pollutants. John Balbus of OD was quoted. The **U.S. Department of State** issued a press release June 16 titled “The U.S. commitment to cookstoves in Africa” that includes information about NIEHS efforts.

In June, a review paper in the journal **Environmental Health Perspectives**, co-authored by NIEHS scientist Sue Fenton, entitled “Environmental exposures and mammary gland development: State of the science, public health implications, and research recommendations” resulted in stories in numerous media outlets, including **Slate.com**, **Chemical Regulation Reporter**, and **Environmental Health News**.

On June 23, Birnbaum talked to **CBS News** for a story they developed titled “Do chemicals make people fat?”

NIEHS continues to increase its presence in the NIH Community in Bethesda, Md., focusing on intramural research. Several stories about NIEHS researchers and activities appeared on the **DDIR Web pages** and in the **NIH Catalyst** in July.

On July 13, NIEHS issued a press release about a DIR paper entitled “[NIH investigators discover new mechanism that may be important for learning and memory](#).” The paper was shared with science reporters.

On July 7, an [NIEHS press release](#) announced \$25.2 million in research grants to Gulf area universities that partner with communities affected by the oil spill. This research network is addressing health questions specifically identified by the community as a need. OCPL led a coordinated launch with the grantees who developed independent press releases. **The Miami Herald**, **The Times-Picayune**, and approximately 100 other news outlets covered the announcement.

In July, several media outlets, including **CNN**, **Endocrine Insider**, **Daily Caller**, and **Chemical Regulation Reporter** wrote about draft legislation that would give more authority to NIEHS to ban certain chemicals.

On July 12, **Risk Policy Report** wrote a story titled “Novel ‘green’ chemical endocrine screening protocol looks beyond EPA’s” that includes quotes from Thaddeus Schug of NIEHS. Schug and others from NIEHS attended a meeting on green chemistry in Washington, D.C. in June.

On July 15, a story in **Discovery News** entitled “Even BPA-free plastic not always safe” included quotes from Birnbaum.

On July 19, a story in the **Wall Street Journal** business section included an interview with Zeldin in an article entitled “Silver lining to fighting germs.”

On July 19, a story in the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** entitled “Researchers' quest for gold” highlighted the work of an NIEHS grantee.

On July 27, **EmaxHealth** wrote a story “Mesothelioma risk in some US roads and dust” that highlights work conducted by Aubrey Miller of NIEHS in the journal PNAS.

The **Los Angeles Times** and other media outlets tout the role that NTP findings on hexavalent chromium played in California efforts to set a new public health goal, in an article in July titled “California acts to limit pollutant targeted by Erin Brockovich.”

On August 1, the Raleigh **News and Observer** ran a story titled “Cashiers sought for health study” that included quotes by Bucher and Stavros Garantzotis of DIR, about a study being conducted in the NIEHS Clinical Research unit.

On August 11, the **Triangle Business Journal** profiled the new NIEHS Associate Director for Management, Joellen Austin.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION, OUTREACH, AND TRAINING

Materials Development

OCPL developed and disseminated new informational materials during the May-August timeframe including:

- [Center for Children’s Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research: Protecting Children’s Health for a Lifetime](#)
- [Tox21: Transforming Environmental Health](#)
- [Fact Sheet – The Report on Carcinogens](#)
- [Fact Sheet – Aristolochic Acids](#)
- [Fact Sheet – Formaldehyde](#)
- [Fact Sheet – Styrene](#)
- [Fact Sheet – Certain Glass Wool Fibers \(Inhalable\)](#)
- [Questions and Answers About the 12th Edition Report on Carcinogens](#)

- Updated Fact Sheet NIEHS Continues Response to Gulf Oil Spill
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/materials/niehs-continues-response-to-gulfspill.pdf>
- Developing a fact sheet on “Windows of Susceptibility” for the American Academy of Pediatrics Conference scheduled October 15-17 in Boston, Mass.

All fact sheets and brochures are available on the NIEHS website at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/materials/index.cfm>.

Promoting NIEHS Staff Achievements Internally and Externally

In July, OCPL worked closely with researcher Lisa Rider of DIR to highlight a prestigious award she received from the U.S. Public Health Service. A story in the online newsletter, the **Environmental Factor**, titled “[Rider honored by U.S. Public Health Service medical officers](#),” was followed by subsequent stories in a number of places including the **NIH Record**, **NIH DDIR (Deputy Director for Intramural Research) Web Board**, and **American Academy of Pediatrics News**.

The July issue of the **Environmental Factor** and the **NIH Record** also highlighted an [award given to Bill Suk of DERT](#) by a combustion emissions group.

OCPL has developed a listserv of approximately 70 local media outlets in the Research Triangle Park area. Ready-to-print stories about NIEHS people and activities are developed and disseminated bi-weekly, resulting in more local news coverage.

Efforts are also focused on internal communications of news, including overseeing the updates and redesign of the NIEHS employee intranet site (Junction).

Online Newsletter

The NIEHS monthly online newsletter, the **Environmental Factor**, highlights NIEHS research, staff accomplishments, and ongoing activities. Many of the stories in the **Environmental Factor** are selected and used by other publications, including the **NIH Record**, **NIH Catalyst**, **NTP Update**, and others (see <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/index.cfm>). The number of subscribers to the newsletter continues to increase, with 1,090 subscribers in July. The **Environmental Factor** is also recognized as a great place for postdocs, and other staff interested in writing, to gain experience and receive mentoring from OCPL staff.

Content on Big Screen TV Monitors at NIEHS

Since the installation of the big screen monitors, OCPL and the Computer Technology Branch have purchased software to support 24-hour programming on the monitors. The rotating messaging is updated throughout the day to showcase important science events and videos, as well as news, research papers, new publications, achievements, alerts, and other highlights of interest to NIEHS staff. Monitors are located in the Rall building lobby and cafeteria, and in the lobby of the Keystone building.

Social Media Efforts

NIEHS continues to develop its social media presence with **Twitter** (<http://twitter.com/niehs>). As of July, NIEHS has about 1,500 followers. Popular topics on Twitter include NIH/NIEHS Student Loan Repayment Program, Strategic Plan, job vacancies, Gulf oil spill, and flame retardants.

NIEHS OCPL is working to establish an **NIEHS Flickr** account to store and post relevant photography about NIEHS staff, research, facilities, and current events.

Public Inquiries

OCPL responds to approximately 150 public inquiries per month, received by phone, mail, and e-mail. The questions range from concerns about electromagnetic fields (EMFs) to requests for educational materials and referrals to environmental health clinics.

News Writing, Web, and Media Training

OCPL sponsored four small group media training sessions for 20 scientists from throughout the institute on August 18-19. The training helps staff become better spokespeople and provides them with the confidence and skills needed to conduct media interviews.

An all-day writing class will be conducted on September 20 for postdocs and others currently writing for the Environmental Factor and other NIEHS communications products.

OCPL also sponsored 9 classes in Section 508 training, to teach staff and contractors how to make documents accessible to people with disabilities.

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