

**POST-CONFERENCE PROCEEDINGS  
WORKSHOP SESSION SUMMARY  
NIEHS NATIONAL TRAINERS' EXCHANGE  
MARCH 2012**

**1. Session Title and Presenter's Contact Information:**

"Understanding Chemicals and Safer Substitutions for Workers"

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**2. Workshop Summary**

This workshop discussed effects of chemicals on human health and the importance of knowing the laws and tools to protect us. The workshop makes the connection between good workplace health and safety and a clean and healthy environment. Participants worked in small groups and reported back with summaries of a factsheet and what it tells us about the effect of chemicals on human health. Following that activity, a lecture format with Powerpoint was used to discuss what some groups and states are doing to protect workers and consumers from unsafe chemical exposures in the absence of strong federal laws. Finally, a demonstration and group discussion were held about ChemHAT, a new online tool being developed by workers for workers about chemical hazards and safer alternatives. The group discussion centered around what the tool will need for it to be most useful for workers and trainers.

**3. Methods**

There were several training methods used in this workshop. Small group discussions and factsheet reading were utilized. Each table read and discussed a factsheet provided by the facilitator. Then someone from each table reported back to the whole group with a summary of the factsheet and the table's discussion.

A lecture with a Powerpoint presentation was used to discuss what groups are doing related to reducing harmful chemical exposures. At the end of this presentation, there was a demonstration of ChemHAT and a group discussion to discuss what trainers need in an online chemical tool and how they can use it in the classroom.

#### **4. Main Points**

##### **Key lessons**

- Workplace health and safety and a clean and healthy environment are linked.
- The prevalence of chronic disease in the United States is rising.
- Some chemicals that were considered safe have turned out to be really dangerous, leading to many different types of disease, many years after exposure.
- Animal studies and wildlife tragedies can predict harm in humans.
- The timing of exposure can be the most important factor in whether a chemical is dangerous.
- Everyone in the United States is contaminated by toxic chemicals, but public policies can reduce our bodies' burden of chemicals.
- Our chemical management laws through OSHA and EPA (Toxic Substances Control Act) are stuck in the 1970s.
- Various groups are trying to work with the existing laws and protect the public through online chemical and consumer product databases.
- States are passing toxics legislation with bipartisan support to protect workers and residents.
- The BlueGreen Alliance, the IUE-CWA, and the United Steelworkers are working together to create an online resource, called ChemHAT, for workers and trainers to find hazard and safer alternatives information for chemicals in the workplace. Input from workers and worker-training organizations is crucial to make this the most useful resource possible.

#### **5. References**

#### **6. Workshop Handouts/ Resources**

Powerpoint presentation: *Chemicals and Our Health – NIEHS Trainers Exchange 2012*

Factsheet: *How the reproductive problems of Florida panthers and American men are connected*

***NIEHS WETP National Trainers' Exchange: Training Today for a Safer Tomorrow***

March 28-29, 2012, Fort Lauderdale, FL.

Factsheet: *Agent Orange: What we learned from an uncontrolled experiment on American soldiers and the people of Southeast Asia*

Factsheet: *Breast cancer and DDT: Why timing can matter more than dose*

Factsheet: *Biomonitoring: Measuring chemicals in people*

Website: [www.chemhat.violadigital.com](http://www.chemhat.violadigital.com)