

Delegation enjoys high profile at APHA

By Eddy Ball

Despite new travel restrictions for federal employees, a smaller NIEHS delegation still had a significant impact at the 2013 American Public Health Association (APHA) annual [meeting](http://www.apha.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting) (http://www.apha.org/meetings/AnnualMeeting) Nov. 2-6 in Boston. The 141st annual gathering attracted more than 13,000 public health specialists from around the world.

Along with presentations by several NIEHS grantees, senior scientists from the Institute, led by NIEHS and NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., underscored the continuing need for better understanding the health impact of the environment, and developing effective primary prevention measures in promotion of public health.

As Birnbaum observed afterwards, "We were fewer in number this year, but we got our messages out. People were certainly aware of the NIEHS presence at key sessions and awards ceremonies throughout the week."

Birnbaum received the 44th annual APHA Homer N. Calver Award Nov. 4 for her outstanding contributions as an environmental scientist (see [story](#)). NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program (WETP) industrial hygienist Sharon Beard was honored Nov. 5 with the 2013 Lorin Kerr Award for her leadership of the highly regarded Minority Worker Training Program (see [story](#)).

During the busy week in Boston, NIEHS delegates and grantees participated in sessions exploring the environmental public health implications of several high-visibility events and developments.

Partnerships for Environmental Public Health (PEPH)

Led by NIEHS program analyst Liam O'Fallon, grantees in the Institute's PEPH program participated in five poster and oral sessions at the meeting. Topics ranged from worker safety and training, and holistic training approaches to address environmental stressors on reproductive health, to communicating risk to environmental justice communities, and the impact of neighborhood violence on physical activity in the built environment.

O'Fallon also moderated a cutting-edge session Nov. 4 on "Health and Hydrofracking: Community Outreach and Information Needs." Speakers in the session tackled emerging community information needs, in the wake of the spread of hydrofracking in the U.S.

One year later - Hurricane Sandy and worker safety

Addressing a disaster that still makes the evening news one year later, NIEHS representatives Chip Hughes, WETP director, and contractor Deborah Weinstock, of the National Clearinghouse for Worker Safety and Health Training, joined WETP grantees and other public health specialists for a Nov. 4 session on "Emergency Response and Cleanup Efforts Following Hurricane Sandy."

Hughes and Weinstock focused on worker protection in Hurricane Sandy and other disasters. They discussed challenges faced by the WETP network in trying to protect recovery workers from safety and environmental hazards, and possible policy changes to improve worker and community protection in future disasters.

Impact of repeated disasters on public health resilience

Moderated by NIEHS Director of the Office of Scientific Information Management [Allen Dearry, Ph.D.](#), the Nov. 6 session on public health resilience marshaled the talents of NIEHS Senior Advisor for Public Health [John Balbus, M.D.](#), and veteran grantees Bernard Goldstein, M.D., of the University of Pittsburgh, and Maureen Lichtveld, M.D., of Tulane University. With a focus on such disasters as Hurricane Katrina and the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, the speakers examined the impact of natural



Birnbaum, shown during her Calver Award talk, led the NIEHS delegation. Her award lecture addressed increasingly widespread chemical exposures. (Photo courtesy of Liam O'Fallon)



Beard's Kerr Award honored her for developing safety and health training programs for low-income workers, particularly those in highly hazardous occupations. (Photo courtesy of Julia Keller)

and man-made disasters on the role of public health capacity building in strengthening resilience.

Speakers described the scientific principles of resilience and their relevance to public health. Topics included factors influencing resilience in communities experiencing repeated disasters, and transdisciplinary research approaches for examining the interconnectedness of ecosystem and public health resilience.

Even for attendees who did not hear talks by Birnbaum and Beard, or participate in NIEHS-supported sessions, it would have been hard to overlook the eye-catching NIEHS-NTP-Environmental Health Perspectives display in the meeting's exposition area. Staffed by NIEHS Director of Communications Christine Flowers and volunteers, the booth communicates the groups' missions through display boards and a broad selection of literature.



O'Fallon, left, worked front and center promoting the PEPH program, as a moderator, above, as well as behind the scenes helping coordinate the messages of grantees in other sessions. (Photo courtesy of Christine Flowers)



In addition to his presentation on Hurricane Sandy, Hughes also addressed worker health and safety during his nomination speech for Beard's Kerr Award. (Photo courtesy of Julia Keller)



Speakers in the public health resilience session included, from left, Balbus; Lichtveld; Darry; Joy Osofsky, Ph.D., of Louisiana State University; Lisanne Brown, Ph.D., of Tulane University; and Goldstein. (Photo courtesy of Anna Hassan, Tulane University)



Along with its handsome panels, the NIEHS display also featured fact sheets and other literature about environmental exposures and primary prevention. (Photo courtesy of Christine Flowers)

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