

NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)
September 2009-February 2010

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I. EVENTS

Promoting NIEHS and NTP at Society of Toxicology (SOT) Annual Meeting. OCPL is working with NIEHS and National Toxicology Program (NTP) staff to promote the work of the Institute, its partners, and grantees at the March SOT meeting in Salt Lake City. This year, OCPL staff will introduce new outreach tools to share the excitement of SOT. Live updates will be provided by NIEHS representatives, including NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, and invited guests attending the SOT conference. They'll be reporting on all the innovations, the breakthrough research, the awards being given out, and the interesting people that make SOT so unique. The updates will be provided on the NIEHS and NTP Web sites at www.niehs.nih.gov/LiveatSOT and on [Twitter @LiveatSOT](https://twitter.com/LiveatSOT). OCPL is coordinating an NIEHS presence at many upcoming meetings, including AAAS in February.

HHS Update on BPA. On January 15, 2010, HHS hosted a series of teleconferences to update various audiences, including Congress, the media, partners and stakeholders, and industry about the chemical bisphenol A (BPA). NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum joined U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) Deputy Secretary William Corr, U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA) Commissioner Peggy Hamburg, and others to provide the updates. OCPL worked closely with the NIEHS/NTP Director and staff scientists to ensure a coordinated HHS message on BPA. OCPL developed coordinated science-based messages, [new Web pages](#), outreach materials, and graphics depicting the science being discussed, and reached out to the media and other representatives to inform them of the teleconferences and to respond to media inquiries. More than 100 major stories were written on the topic including articles in **The Washington Post**, **USA Today**, **Web MD**, **The New York Times**, **LA Times**, **The Globe and Mail**, **Reuters**, **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel**, and **Health News**. A commentary in **Our Stolen Future** also focused on the BPA announcement.

Soy Infant Formula. OCPL worked closely with NIEHS/NTP and HHS staff to convey to the media, industry representatives, and other audiences the outcomes of the NTP's Expert Panel Evaluation of Soy Infant Formula conducted December 16-18, 2009. The Expert Panel expressed minimal concern for adverse developmental effects in infants fed soy infant formula. OCPL staff helped develop a dedicated section on the NIEHS and NTP Web pages, to convey the findings and develop responses to frequently asked questions on the topic. The Web pages are available at

<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/media/questions/sya-soy-formula.cfm>. OCPL staff facilitated requests for interviews with HHS/NIH and the NIEHS/NTP. Several stories were written about the expert panel results, including several **ABC affiliates**.

Climate Change Event. OCPL staff played a lead role in working with others in the Institute to coordinate a major international press conference highlighting a new series of peer-reviewed papers focusing on how to tackle climate change and improve health. The event on November 25, 2009 brought together key researchers and public health officials in the United States and Britain, via satellite simulcast, to highlight the series of NIEHS-supported papers in the journal, *The Lancet*, outlining strategies that reduce greenhouse gases and benefit human health. NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., and Senior Advisor Christopher Portier, Ph.D., took a lead role in the U.S. portion of the event held at the National Press Club in Washington, D.C. OCPL staff developed a news advisory and a press release entitled “[NIH Teams Up With The Lancet and Leading International Organizations to Address Public Health Impacts of Climate Change: New Strategies Promote Health and Reduce Greenhouse Gas Emissions](#),” Web pages, and other outreach materials, and coordinated all media requests surrounding the event. Close to 400 stories appeared on this topic, including a taping by **C-Span**, and several stories by the **Associated Press**, **USA Today**, **Bloomberg News**, **PBS News Hour**, **Belfast Telegraph**, and **BNA**.

Promote Participation in Community Forums. OCPL worked with staff throughout the Institute to promote and convey information about several town hall forums that were hosted across the country in the fall. The October 1, 2009 town hall meeting in Milwaukee featured a presentation by NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum. The town hall event was held after meeting with the directors of NIEHS Environmental Health Sciences Core Centers, who were gathered at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee (UWM) for a three-day annual conference. In November 2009, Birnbaum and several NIEHS staff participated in a series of events dedicated to discussing breast cancer and the environment, including the annual meeting of the Breast Cancer and the Environment Research Centers (BCERC) and a public forum in Sausalito, California. OCPL staff arranged media interviews for the events. Birnbaum was a guest on California’s KQED public radio <http://www.kqed.org/epArchive/R911180931>. Birnbaum also did an interview for a story with a reporter from **Environmental Health News** that also appeared in **Scientific American** on November 20, 2009. Another November 20, 2009 story in the **Marin Independent Journal** entitled “Breast Cancer Researchers at Sausalito Forum Defend Mammogram Advice” also included quotes from Birnbaum.

Additionally, OCPL highlighted the community forums in the NIEHS monthly newsletter <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2009/november/spotlight-milwaukee.cfm> and <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2009/december/spotlight-forum.cfm>.

Promote Special Online Supplement on Environmental and Occupational Justice. The NIEHS, National Institute for Occupational Safety and Health (NIOSH), and U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) worked together to develop and support a special online supplement to the *American Journal of Public Health*. The issue highlights

various contributions of environmental and occupational justice projects across the country, and includes 30 research based articles, editorials, and commentaries from community, government, and academic leaders in the field. OCPL worked with DERT staff and the other agencies to promote this supplement. Web pages, news releases, and flyers were developed. Information was also e-mailed directly to grantees through listservs.

Cell phone meeting and hearing. On September 14, 2009, OCPL joined with toxicologists from the NTP to travel to Washington to present updates on research supported by NTP and NIEHS related to exposure to radiofrequency energy from the use of cellular telephones. Michael Wyde, Ph.D., presented an overview of the NTP cell phone radiofrequency radiation studies at an "Expert Conference on Cell Phones and Health: Science and Public Policy Questions." NTP Associate Director John Bucher presented testimony at a hearing on the health effects of cell phone use before the U.S. Senate Committee on Appropriations, Subcommittee on Labor, Health and Human Services, Education, and Related Agencies.. OCPL worked with NTP staff to develop a fact sheet on cell phones and responded to media and public inquiries on the topic. OCPL also developed a story for the online newsletter and for the NTP Update <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/newsletter/2009/october/spotlight-ntp.cfm>. Some of the press coverage for this topic included an on-camera interview with CNN and Voice of America, and stories in **ABC News, Fox News, KTVU in California, NASDAQ, PC Magazine, Post-Gazette, Science News, Finance and Commerce, Detroit News, Chattanooga Times Free Press, Business Week, The New York Times, and The News & Observer.**

II. NEWS COVERAGE

Total News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers and Activities

In September 2009, NIEHS was cited in 327 news stories
In October 2009, NIEHS was cited in 373 news stories
In November 2009, NIEHS was cited in 1078 news stories
In December 2009, NIEHS was cited in 532 news stories
Total count for 2009 is about **4850** mentions of NIEHS/NTP in the news.
In January 2010, NIEHS was cited in 636 news stories.

Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

On August 28, 2009, **Science** magazine ran a story entitled "Confronting a Toxic Blowback From the Electronics Trade" that included a quote from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

On August 31, 2009, OCPL staffed worked with researchers at the University of Southern California to include a quote from Birnbaum in their press release showing that

exposure to tobacco smoke before birth affects DNA. The findings and Birnbaum's quote were highlighted in several outlets including **MSNBC** and **Health Day News**.

In early September 2009, a story ran in **CNET News** entitled "Researchers Seek Funds to Study Cell Phone Safety," which focused on an international expert conference on cell phones and health, and where NIEHS presented findings. **TMCnet** also wrote about the meeting.

On September 13, 2009, OCPL worked with DERT staff and our grantee to develop a press release entitled, "[Electronic Nose Sniffs out Toxins](#)." More than 25 stories appeared as a result of this release in outlets such as **Scientific American**, and the **NIH Record**.

In September 2009, OCPL staff worked with epidemiologists at NIEHS to highlight one of their new papers in PLoS Genetics. A story in the NIEHS newsletter entitled "[Genome-Wide Association Study Focuses on Asthma in Children](#)" was picked up by several media outlets including **UPI**.

On September 9, 2009, stories ran in the **Star-Ledger** and on **NBC New York** about electromagnetic fields (EMFs) and a New Jersey school. Information from the NIEHS about EMFs was presented in the stories.

On September 11, 2009, **Newsweek** ran a story entitled, "Born to be Big: Early Exposure to Common Chemicals May Be Programming Kids to be Fat." The story included several quotes from Retha Newbold of the Division of Intramural Research (DIR) and Jerry Heindel of the Division of Extramural Research and Training (DERT).

On September 16, 2009, OCPL and DERT staff worked with the NIH OD and other Institutes to issue a press release entitled, "[NIH Funds Grantees Focusing on Epigenomics of Human Health and Disease](#)."

A September 22, 2009 article in **Miller-McCune** entitled "Seeking Chemical Culprits for those Deformities" focused on the work of many NIEHS grantees.

On October 1, 2009, a story in the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** entitled "Children's Diseases Linked to Chemicals on Rise, Professor Says" included quotes from grantee Phillip Landrigan of Mt. Sinai School of Medicine and highlighted the fact that Birnbaum would be a key note speaker at a town hall meeting in Milwaukee.

On October 5, 2009, OCPL worked with program staff to issue a press release entitled, "[Sister Study Exceeds Recruitment Goal: Now the Real Work Begins](#)." The **Chicago Tribune** and **LA Times** wrote stories on the study that included quotes from Dale Sandler of DIR. The NIH home page also featured this release on its front page for several days.

On October 7, 2009, a story entitled “Chemical Linked to Aggression in Girls” in the Raleigh **News and Observer** included quotes from NTP Associate Director John Bucher. A similar story on this topic also appeared in **USA Today**.

On October 7, 2009, a story in **The New York Times** entitled “Regulators Plan to Study Risks of Atrazine” included quotes from an interview with NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

OCPL and DERT staff worked together with the Salk Institute to highlight a new finding about epigenetic research. An October 9, 2009 press release entitled “What Drives our Genes? Researchers May the First Complete Human Epigenome” includes a quote from NIEH Director Linda Birnbaum. The story appeared in **Science Daily**, **The Atlanta Journal Constitution**, **Health Day**, and other outlets.

In October 2009, OCPL staff worked with NIEHS epidemiologist Christine Parks of DIR to showcase her new findings about insecticides and autoimmune diseases at the College of Rheumatology’s annual scientific meeting. Stories appeared in **USA Today**, **Arthritis Today**, **ABC News**, **Web MD**, and other media outlets.

On October 18, 2009, Senior Advisor Christopher Portier was quoted in the **Edmonton Journal’s** story entitled, “Lines Drawn in Power Debate.”

On October 21, 2009, **Discover** Magazine did a short story entitled “Numbers: Plastics, from Manufacturing to Recycling to Long Death in a Landfill,” which mentioned the NTP report on BPA.

On October 21, 2009, Jane Hoppin of DIR was quoted in a **Reuters** story titled “Farmers’ Pesticides May Not Raise Heart Risks.”

On October 26, 2009, **The Sacramento Bee** ran a story by Erin Brockovich entitled “My View: Chromium 6 Still Threatens California’s Drinking Waters,” which includes several references to NTP studies on hexavalent chromium.

On October 28, 2009, OCPL issued a press release entitled [“NIEHS Awards Recovery Act Funds to Address Bisphenol A Research Gaps”](#). Stories in the **Washington Post**, **USA Today**, **The Daily Environment**, and others included quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

On November 3, 2009, a story in **Environmental Health News** on “Soy Foods” featured quotes from Retha Newbold of DIR. A November 9, 2009 story in **The Daily Green** also quoted Newbold in its story entitled “How Much Tofu Is Too Much Tofu?”

On November 4, 2009, NIEHS worked with National Institute of Mental Health (NIMH) to issue a press release entitled [“NIH Awards More than 50 Grants to Boost Search for Causes, Improve Treatments for Autism.”](#)

On November 6, 2009, NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum responded to an **Associated Press** request to answer questions from readers about polluted waters. Birnbaum was quoted in the “Ask AP” column.

The New York Times wrote a series of stories throughout the fall on environmental issues. The November 8, 2009 story entitled “Chemicals in Our Food, and Bodies” refers to several grantees and to the NIEHS publication *Environmental Health Perspectives*. The December 17, 2009 component of the series, “That Tap Water is Legal But May Be Unhealthy” includes quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

On November 10, 2009, the **Associated Press** story, “Chemical BPA in Workers Linked to Sex Problems” included comments from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum on the study that was supported by NIOSH. **New Scientist** also ran a story on the study.

On November 16, 2009, OCPL worked with National Institute on Aging (NIA) staff and DIR researchers to issue a press release entitled “[Researchers Identify Gene Mutations Underlying Risk for Most Common Form of Parkinson’s Disease](#)” that was funded in part by NIEHS.

On November 19, 2009, OCPL worked with DERT staff to issue a press release titled “[NIEHS Awards Recovery Act Funds to Focus More Research on Health and Safety of Nanomaterials.](#)” The release was written about in **Occupational Health and Safety**.

On November 26, 2009, a story in **Reuters** entitled “Professional Pesticide Use Ups Risk of Nasal Woes” included quotes from Jane Hoppin of DIR.

On December 3, 2009, a story in the **Environment and Energy Daily** focused on NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum’s statement delivered to Congress about the Toxic Substances Control Act.

On December 8, 2009, the **Chicago Tribune** ran a story entitled “Agent Orange: Birth Defects Plague Vietnam: US Slow to Help” that included quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

In December 2009, OCPL staff worked with Sangmi Kim, an epidemiologist in DIR, to promote her findings on omega-3 fatty acids that were being presented at a cancer prevention conference in Texas. The results of her findings were written about in **The Daily Record and the Food Consumer**.

On December 11, 2009, the **Milwaukee Journal Sentinel** (MJS) ran a story titled “It’s Best to Avoid BPA, Federal Official Says,” which included quotes from NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum. A January 5, 2010 editorial in the MJS also included mention of Birnbaum.

On December 22, 2009, the **Associated Press** and **ABC News** ran a story titled “Feds Mull Regulating Drugs in Water” that included quotes by NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum.

On January 5, 2010, **The Wall Street Journal** ran a story entitled “Does Mattress Cleaning Treat Dust Mite Allergies?” which includes quotes from an interview with Darryl Zeldin of DIR.

In early January 2010, several media outlets, including **Scientific American**, **BusinessWeek**, and **The Palm Beach Post**, ran stories entitled “Chemicals in Many Consumer Plastics Linked to Heart Disease.” NTP and NIEHS were mentioned in these stories.

On January 29, 2010, **Consumer Reports** ran a story entitled “Expert Q and A: Toxicologist Linda Birnbaum on BPA” that focused on a recent interview with the NIEHS/NTP director.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION, OUTREACH AND TRAINING

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA). The OCPL continues to work closely with DERT and the NIH OD to disseminate information about the ARRA awards. Several press releases were developed, and Web content continues to be updated, including the development of ARRA success stories.

Public Inquiries. OCPL responded to approximately 100 public inquiries per month, received by phone, mail and e-mail. The questions range from concerns about EMF and BPA, to requests for educational materials or referrals to environmental health clinics. In 2009, OCPL responded to 1,548 public inquiries.

Online Newsletter. OCPL continues to increase readership of the NIEHS monthly online newsletter called the Environmental Factor that highlights NIEHS research, staff accomplishments, and ongoing activities. In 2009, the newsletter saw a 60 percent increase in traffic. Many of the stories in the factor are 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, the NIEHS Web pages were viewed 8 million times. Some Web highlights include:

- OCPL worked with the information technology staff at NIEHS to select and purchase a new Web content management system. OCPL staff also participated in the training for the implementation of the new content management system.
- OCPL continues to provide oversight for the usability and Section 508 (accessibility for people with disabilities) compliance of all Web materials.

- OCPL works with program staff throughout NIEHS to update and, when needed, develop new content and designs for both the internal and external NIEHS Web pages.
- OCPL consulted with the redesign of the Chemical Effects in Biological Systems (CEBS) database interface to be more user friendly, attractive, and Section 508 accessible. CEBS is a public database available to environmental health researchers that houses data from domains such as clinical pathology, histopathology, and omics.
- OCPL staff also worked closely with the Combined Federal Campaign volunteers to create visually appealing and user friendly internal Web pages. The CFC exceeded its goal last year.

Materials Support. OCPL continues to work with program staff to develop materials for their programs. OCPL helps to develop posters and PowerPoint presentations that professionally highlight program achievements for laboratory reviews, retreats, and advisory, board, and scientific meetings.

Writing Classes. In early December 2009, OCPL sponsored two professional news writing courses for OCPL staff and others in the Institute. Each two-day class was taught by established author and communicator Janice (Ginny) Redish. Redish focused on tips to keep up with new trends in the writing industry, and to write clearly and concisely.

Media Training. On September 29-30, 2009, OCPL teamed with trainers from The Communication Center in Washington, D.C., to provide tailored, small-group training to 12 scientists in the Institute. The training helps NIEHS/NTP staff more effectively and confidently communicate science findings to the media.

New OCPL Staff Member. On October 25, 2009, OCPL welcomed a new staff member to its team. Public Affairs Specialist Ed Kang has extensive experience in media relations and communications, writing, Web design, audio and video production, and project management. Prior to joining NIEHS, Ed was a public affairs specialist and spokesperson for the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) located in Bethesda, Maryland. At CPSC, Ed created written content, podcasts, and consumer videos on product safety for Facebook, Twitter, Flickr, YouTube, and numerous other social networking and blog sites. Ed will be working with OCPL staff and others throughout the institute to utilize social media tools at NIEHS.

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