

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

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I. EVENTS

Oil Spill Response Efforts

OCPL has a lead role in providing communications support, and regular updates and consistent messaging to NIH, HHS, and the White House on NIEHS activities related to the Deepwater Gulf oil spill. Specific examples include:

- Implementing the communications roll out plan for the GuLF STUDY, including:
- Developing key messages and responses to commonly asked questions.
- Continuously updating Gulf Oil Spill Response Efforts pages on the NIEHS website (<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/od/programs/gulfspill.cfm>).
- Hosting a media teleconference on February 28, 2011 to launch the GuLF STUDY. Dale Sandler of DIR and Aubrey Miller of DIR participated in the media call that was moderated by the OCPL director.
- Developing and issuing a [media advisory](#) on February 23, 2011, followed by a press release on February 28, 2011 titled “[NIH launches largest oil spill health study](#).”
- Facilitating all media calls. Examples of media coverage:
 - February 11, 2011, the radio show “**Living on Earth**” included a discussion with Dale Sandler of DIR.
 - February 16, 2011, **Times-Picayune** story entitled “Health Study on Effects of Gulf of Mexico Oil Spill Revs Up” that included numerous quotes by Sandler.
 - February 22, 2011, **The Wall Street Journal** article highlighting the NIEHS’ plan to launch the GuLF STUDY.
 - February 28, 2011, **NBC** and **Fox** TV Gulf state affiliates stories about the launch.
 - February 28, 2011, **Science** story “NIH Begins Study on Oil Spill’s Impact on Residents,” which included quotes from Sandler.
 - March 1, 2011, **CNN Health**, **New York Times**, **Northwest Florida Daily News**, and **Florida News Herald** all compiled stories on the study launch.
 - March 3, 2011, Sandler was a guest on **Federal News Radio**.
 - March 14, 2011, **The Examiner** in New Orleans included a Q&A with Sandler.
 - April 11, 2011, **News & Observer** of Raleigh reported on the GuLF STUDY, quoting Sandler.
 - May 1, 2011, Louisiana’s **Daily Comet** mentions the GuLF STUDY.

OCPL also developed communications materials which are posted on our website and other places [to recognize ongoing NIEHS efforts](#) one year after the Deepwater Horizon tragedy. A number of media requests were fulfilled to discuss our ongoing presence in Gulf states. Some examples of these anniversary stories include:

- April 15, 2011, **Need to Know** on PBS mentioned the GuLF STUDY in an introduction to a video.
- April 19, 2011, **Gambit**, a New Orleans-based website, mentions the GuLF STUDY and quotes Sandler.
- April 20, 2011, **National Geographic** refers to the NIEHS study of cleanup workers.

Launching Strategic Planning Process

OCPL worked closely with NIEHS Deputy Director Rick Woychik, Office of Policy, Planning, and Evaluation Director Sheila Newton, and others, to help promote and obtain input for its new Strategic Plan. A user-friendly website, <http://strategicplan.niehs.nih.gov/>, was launched March 17, 2011, to receive visionary ideas and nominations for an upcoming workshop that will be part of the planning process. More than 2,500 people provided input before the submission period ended on April 30, 2011, generating more than 230 ideas for consideration. OCPL helped develop all promotional activities related to the plan, including Web content, posters, email communications, ads, PowerPoint slides and presentations, [a press release](#), and several Environmental Factor stories, including:

- [“Council moves ahead with strategic planning and concept clearances”](#)
- [“Woychik talks about NIEHS and the 2012-2016 Strategic Plan”](#)
- [“NIEHS wants visionary ideas for strategic planning”](#)

Promoting NIEHS and NTP at Society of Toxicology (SOT) Annual Meeting

OCPL worked closely with NIEHS and NTP staff to promote the work of the Institute, its partners, and grantees at the March 2011 SOT meeting in Washington, D.C.

- To commemorate the 50th anniversary of SOT, NIEHS worked with SOT and its members to create a “Benchmarks in Toxicology” poster and website that was unveiled at the March SOT meeting. Many SOT members, including the executive leadership of SOT, commented on the historical value of the poster. Within hours of the meeting’s opening, the complete supply of 1,500 posters was exhausted. A poster was also placed into a time capsule to be opened at the 75th anniversary of SOT. An EHP [podcast](#) was also developed.
- For the second year, NIEHS used social media tools to help share findings from the annual meeting. Throughout SOT, 16 NIEHS/NTP staff and guests provided 81 live updates on events taking place. The activity generated several thousand hits to the NIEHS website, and more than 250 views of videos on our newly formed YouTube channel. Live updates were provided on the NIEHS website at www.niehs.nih.gov/LiveatSOT and on [Twitter @NIEHS](#).
- Developed all promotional materials, including a media advisory [“NIH Joins SOT to Celebrate 50 Years of Toxicology Science”](#), to highlight activities.
 - OCPL wrote several stories for the Environmental Factor and other media outlets about SOT activities and awards, including:

- [“SOT to celebrate 50th anniversary benchmark”](#)
- [“50th SOT meeting breaks record”](#)
- [“Trainees honored for scholarship and service at SOT”](#)
- [“Trainees honored by SOT Carcinogenesis Specialty Section”](#)

Dedication of new Tox21 robot system

NIEHS staff worked closely with its federal partners at the National Human Genome Research Institute (NHGRI), U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), and U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA), to coordinate a March 10, 2011, unveiling of the new Tox21 robot at the NIH Chemical Genomics Center (NCGC) in Rockville, Md. NIEHS/NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., joined fellow institute director Eric Green, M.D., Ph.D., of NHGRI, representatives from EPA and FDA, and key Tox21 staff, to dedicate the new system and provide a tour to about 40 invited guests.

OCPL helped coordinate and promote the event. A joint press release with sister agencies on March 10, 2011, entitled [“New robot system to test 10,000 chemicals for toxicity”](#) was developed to highlight the dedication of the robot. OCPL also developed a story for the NIEHS online newsletter titled [“Dedication of new Tox21 robot system to test 10,000 chemicals for toxicity.”](#) Some media highlighted the new robot, including **Nature, Science Daily, and the San Francisco Chronicle.**

Community Forum in Louisiana

Staff from throughout NIEHS worked together with partners in Louisiana, to support a community forum and other outreach activities February 23-25, 2011, to get input on local environmental health concerns in New Orleans and share information about NIEHS programs and research. A story in the Environmental Factor entitled [“NIEHS reaches out in New Orleans”](#) highlights some of the discussions at those meetings.

Content on Big Screen TV Monitors at NIEHS

As part of an effort to improve communications at NIEHS, big screen TV monitors that were installed by the NIH Division of Emergency Preparedness and Coordination for use during an emergency, are now also being utilized to showcase important science events and videos, as well as news, research papers and other highlights of interest to NIEHS staff. OCPL, the Computer Technology Branch (CTB), and others are working together on the utilization of the monitors and possible expansion of monitors to more locations.

II. NEWS COVERAGE

Total News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers, and Activities

February 2011 — 524 stories

March 2011 — 456 stories

April 2011— 350 stories

May 2011 — 88 stories (as of May 5, 2011)

Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

On January 24, 2011, **The Raleigh News and Observer** included a story entitled “Do Chemicals Contribute to Obesity?” that focuses on a workshop hosted by the NTP.

A story in **Diabetes Self Management** on January 26, 2011, also focused on the NTP workshop looking at chemicals and diseases.

On January 25, 2011, the local media outlet **Fifteen 501** highlighted Sandler, who was named NIEHS scientist of the year.

The **Environmental Working Group** published a story on January 26, 2011, titled “NIH Panel Links Vitamin A in Sunscreen to Skin Tumors” that focuses on the NTP studies on retinyl palmitate.

The Journal of Exposure Science and Environmental Epidemiology included a paper entitled “The Promise of Exposure Science” that included quotes from Birnbaum on the need to increase our understanding of low level exposures.

On February 1, 2011, **the NIH Deputy Director for Intramural Research (DDIR)** highlighted on his **website** an award given to an NIEHS scientist.

On February 2, 2011, **The Sacramento Bee** included a story entitled “Senators Debate Pollution in Water” that includes a quote from Birnbaum, who testified at a hearing on chromium-6. A **USA Today** story also highlighted the hearing by including reference to NTP findings. A February 3, 2011, story in **The Oklahoman** also included quotes from the director. **The Washington Post** and **Chemical and Engineering News** also ran stories on this topic.

On February 3, 2011, **Nature** ran a story entitled “Water Flea Genome Offers Revolution in Toxicity Testing” that includes quotes from NTP Division Director John Bucher.

On February 8, 2011, a **Johns Hopkins** publication ran a story entitled “The Aftermath of the Gulf Oil Spill” that focuses on the efforts of Sandler to lead the GuLF STUDY.

On February 8, 2011, a **Times-Picayune** story entitled “Gulf of Mexico oil spill signals need for investment in green technology, activists say” included quotes from Chip Hughes of DERT.

On February 9, 2011, **Food Safety News** included an update on the substance acrylamide that is being studied by NTP. A follow-up story appeared on April 28, 2011.

The New York Times Diner’s Journal Blog ran a story entitled “Flame Retardants Found in Butter” that mentioned one of the lead authors, Birnbaum.

ABC News and other media outlets ran stories on caramel coloring in beverages that included information about some older studies conducted by the NTP on both 2- and 4-methylimidazole. Bucher is quoted in a February 21, 2011, story in **USA Today**.

On February 17, 2011, **AOL News** ran a story entitled “Will Canada Export Death by Rejuvenating the Last Asbestos Mine?” which includes quotes from Chris Weis of OD.

The February 17, 2011, issue of **Nature** included a story entitled “Every Bite You Take” that included quotes from David Balshaw of DERT discussing the NIEHS Exposure Biology Program.

A press release issued by NIEHS on February 11, 2011, titled “[NIH study finds two pesticides associated with Parkinson's disease](#)” generated some media interest. Stories in **U.S. News and World Report**, **Raleigh News and Observer**, **NIH Record**, and **NIH Radio** included quotes from Freya Kamel of DIR, one of the study authors.

On March 1, 2011, the NIEHS Clinical Research Unit was prominently featured in **The NIH Catalyst**.

On March 2, 2011, **NPR** reported on an EHP study on plastic products and BPA. The report refers to the NTP evaluation of BPA.

On March 4, 2011, the **NIH DDIR website** highlighted a paper written by Katarzyna Bebenek, Lars Pedersen, and Tom Kunkel of DIR, as being ranked among the top 2 percent of research articles, according to Faculty of 1000 (F1000).

The March 16, 2011 issue of **U.S. News and World Report** included an article about an NIEHS-funded study on BPA in plastics.

On March 17, 2011, the **PharmaTimes** quoted a **JAMA commentary** by David Resnik of the NIEHS Office of Ethics about establishing a national registry for healthy volunteers participating in Phase I clinical trials.

The March 18, 2011, the **NIH Record** included a feature story about a study conducted by Christine Parks of DIR showing that frequent or extended exposure to pesticides may increase the risk for autoimmune diseases such as lupus and rheumatoid arthritis.

On March 21, 2011, **Medical News Today** quoted Dana Hancock of DIR, first author of a study that found limited and inconclusive data on a link between oral contraceptive pills and asthma in the child. Stephanie London of DIR was senior author of the study.

On April 7, 2011, **The University of Illinois News** reported that NIEHS grantee Kenneth Suslick of the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign received a 2011 Guggenheim Foundation Fellowship.

Several local area papers featured fellow Quiana Childress, who was homeless as a teen, but now working at NIEHS and pursuing medical school, including an April 9, 2011 story in **The Herald-Sun** and April 20, 2011 article in **The Triangle Tribune**. A story was also featured in the **NIH Record**.

On April 11, 2011, the **New Scientist** included a story entitled “Aloe vera extract gave rats tumours,” which quoted Nigel Walker of NTP. On April 14, 2011, **Pharmaceutical Industry and Drugs** also ran a story on the NTP studies on aloe vera. Aloe vera was one of several NTP studies that were peer-reviewed on April 5, 2011.

An April 13, 2011 article in **The New York Times** magazine included a lengthy story entitled “Do Cellphones Cause Brain Cancer,” which included information about the NTP studies on cell phones.

In an April 15, 2011 report in **AOL News** on a Canadian asbestos mine, Aubrey Miller, NIEHS senior medical advisor, is quoted as saying there is no safe level of asbestos exposure.

On April 20-21, 2011, **ABC News, The New York Times, and Medpage Today** covered three EHP papers on pesticides and IQ that were funded as part of the NIEHS and EPA Children’s Centers Program.

A press release issued by NIEHS on March 31, 2011, “[NIH Investigators Find Link Between DNA Damage and Immunity](#),” resulted in several articles, including a feature in the April 21, 2011 issue of **NIH Newsbot**.

On April 25, 2011, **Internal Medicine News** reported on an NIEHS-funded study of manganese exposure as a possible risk factor for developing parkinsonism.

On May 1, 2011, **The Oakland Tribune** of CA included a story entitled ““Smart” meters safe research says, but many see need for more study” which highlights the work of the NTP and includes quotes from Michael Wyde of NTP.

NIEHS worked with NIAID and NHLBI to issue a May 3, 2011, joint press release entitled “[World Asthma Day: NIH research advances help people with asthma](#),” which recognized contributions made by researchers at, and supported by, NIH in the fight against asthma.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION, OUTREACH, AND TRAINING

Materials Development

OCPL developed new informational materials, including:

- [Aloe vera fact sheet](#), released in April, after the NTP peer review of the Aloe vera studies. The materials were reviewed and coordinated throughout HHS.
- [Acrylamide fact sheet](#) on NTP two-year studies. The fact sheet was coordinated with FDA (CFSAN and NCTR) in addition to HHS.
- Videos and podcasts on Aloe vera, featuring Nigel Walker.
(<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/video/health/2011/aloevera/index.cfm>.)

American Recovery and Reinvestment Act (ARRA) Success Stories

OCPL continues to work with DERT and our grantees to highlight examples of how ARRA funding is accelerating research in critical environmental health areas. Four new success stories have been added to the dedicated web space at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/recovery/>

- WETP Recovery Act Successes video
- “Fighting Racial Disparities in Breast Cancer Mortality Rates” (Duke)
- “Training and Health Information Sent via Cell Phone” (BanDeMar Networks)
- “Green Jobs Training for the Future” (UMDNJ)

Public Inquiries

OCPL responded to approximately 120 public inquiries per month, since February 2011, 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.

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>).

Social Media Efforts

NIEHS continues to develop its social media presence. NIEHS now has about 900 twitter (www.twitter.com/niehs) followers. OCPL and others continue to tweet NIEHS news, study updates, grant information, jobs, and other matters of interest to the environmental health community. NIEHS now also has a presence on YouTube with a specially branded channel www.youtube.com/theniehs. Members of the public can subscribe to our channel to receive updates on future additions.

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