

NIEHS Office of Communications and Public Liaison (OCPL)
May – September 2012

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I. EVENTS

Roll Out of Strategic Plan

Worked closely with NIEHS leadership team to design and finalize the content for the [2012-2017 Strategic Plan — Advancing Science, Improving Health: A Plan for Environmental Health Research](#). The plan was posted on the NIEHS and NTP websites on July 31 with an accompanying [editorial](#) in Environmental Health Perspectives by Linda Birnbaum. A condensed version of the plan was developed into a [tri-fold brochure](#) for distribution and downloading. Emails, social media, and listservs were used to disseminate the new plan.

Gulf Study Recruitment Media Efforts

OCPL continues to work closely with the GuLF STUDY (Gulf Long-term Follow-up Study) research team to recruit more volunteers. Throughout the summer, [public service announcements \(PSAs\)](#), featuring the Surgeon General, were distributed and used by local media, asking cleanup workers and others to join the study. Some examples of where the PSA's ran include **Diabetologica, Grays Medicine, Sportsbook Reviews, EHS Today, and World News Inc.**

Arranged satellite media tour for GuLF STUDY lead researcher Dale Sandler of DIR, to help in recruitment and update communities about the study. OCPL also accommodated other media requests for information on the GuLF STUDY. Highlights of some recent stories include:

- June 12, **The Pump Handle** wrote "NIEHS renews study call for Gulf oil spill workers; residents still waiting for services."
- July 23, **The Daily Comet** reported "Largest oil-spill health study needs volunteers," which included quotes from Dale Sandler of DIR.
- July 24, the **Louisiana Radio Network** also interviewed Dale Sandler.

The satellite media tour and subsequent TV, radio, and print interviews have increased visits to the GuLF STUDY website and calls to the call center. In September, new public service announcements, featuring Gulf media reality television celebrities, will be launched to help with recruitment.

Developing iPad/iPhone App

OCPL has been working with its counterparts in the Contracts office and Computer Technology Branch to develop the Institute's first mobile application to disseminate news, research findings, events, and new funding opportunities. A Request for Information was put out in early May,

which generated responses from more than 70 companies. From this information, a Request for Proposal was issued. Responses are due September 5. Several stories appeared after NIEHS used social media to announce this venture, including a **Nextgov story** “NIH wants to create an iPad app for the public.”

My Air, My Health Challenge

The [My Air, My Health Challenge](#), sponsored by NIEHS, the HHS Office of the National Coordinator for Health Information Technology, and EPA, was officially announced June 6 at the Health Data Initiative Forum. My Air, My Health is a national competition to create a personal sensor system that measures air pollution and a person’s physiological response to it. The goal is to help researchers, communities, and physicians better understand the connection between air quality and health. Finalists must develop working prototype sensors that can be worn or easily carried, and demonstrate how their systems can be integrated for practical use by people, as well as health and environmental agencies. OCPL coordinated a media session, [press release](#), social media blitz, and informational webinar.

TV Appearances

Birnbaum appeared as a guest panelist, with other high profile women, on the July 13 PBS TV show **To the Contrary**, to discuss research on BPA.

<http://video.pbs.org/video/2256226316?starttime=870>

May 22, **America Now**, a national news show, featured the lab of Bill Copeland of DIR for his team’s work on mitochondrial disease.

<http://www.americanownews.com/story/16435888/mitochondrial-disease-can-shorten-a-childs-life>

II. NEWS COVERAGE

Total News Coverage of NIEHS Science, Researchers, and Activities

May 2012 — 533 stories

June 2012 — 372 stories

July 2012— 904 stories

August 2012 — 529 stories

Highlights from Newspapers, Trade Papers, and National Magazines

The May-June and July-August issues of the **NIH Catalyst**, a publication that highlights NIH intramural research, ran several articles on NIEHS activities, including:

- An NIEHS press release and paper by Mike Waalkes of DNTP on “Arsenic turns stem cells cancerous.”
- “Gulf Oil Spill Study” highlighting Sandler.

- The work of DIR scientist Serena Dudek on “Environmental toxins.”
- “Cellular Damage from normal metabolism potentially causes cancer,” which was also made into an [NIH Radio segment](#).
- “Linking genes, environmental exposure, and disease” about the NIEHS DNA registry for scientists.

May 11, Birnbaum was quoted in several stories about BPA and endocrine disruption, which ran in **E&E News**, “Federal screening shows BPA hormonal effects; top scientist calls for more tests,” and **BNA’s Daily Environment Report**, “Scientists say policy changes needed as safety tests do not identify some chemicals.”

May 14, **EmpowerHER** featured a story about new autoimmune data out of NIEHS, which included quotes from Fred Miller of DIR.

May 14, Gwen Collman of DERT and Sue Fenton of DNTP were quoted in an article in **Inside EPA** that focused on a meeting of the Interagency Breast Cancer and Environmental Research Coordinating Committee.

May 14, the **Louisville Courier-Journal** featured the work of Honglei Chen of DIR and others in a story “Tobacco virus may help prevent Parkinson’s, University of Louisville researchers say.”

May 15, NIEHS worked with USC to issue a **press release**, “Beijing Olympics experiment reveals biological link between air pollution exposure, cardiovascular disease,” which included a quote from Caroline Dilworth of DERT.

May 15, **OMB Watch** reported “Why is the Small Business Administration arguing that formaldehyde doesn’t cause cancer?” which discusses the NTP’s listing of formaldehyde in the Report on Carcinogens (RoC).

May 22, **The Pump Handle** ran a story about the RoC, “Doubt and other products: The National Toxicology Program’s Report on Carcinogens, bad for whole business?” Stories about the RoC appeared in other outlets including **Inside EPA**, “GOP presses administration to speed NAS review of ‘Carcinogens’ report,” and **BNA**, “House spending bill would freeze work on federal Report on Carcinogens.

May 16, **USA Today** wrote “Lead poisoning guidelines revised; more considered at risk,” which includes information provided by Andrew Rooney of DNTP.

May 19, **The New York Times** wrote the article, “Are you safe on that sofa?” which includes quotes from Birnbaum talking about flame retardant research.

May 23, the **Environmental Defense Fund** developed a story about a new flame retardant paper in Environmental Health Perspectives (EHP), the NIEHS-supported journal.

May 31-June 2, **Michigan Radio**, **CBS News**, **Co.EXIST**, **Mother Jones**, **Web MD**, **Discovery News**, **The Huffington Post**, **Chemical Watch**, **One Green Planet**, **WPIX-TV**, **Daily Mail (UK)**, **KDFW-TV**, **KKTV-TV**, **CNN**, **Jezebel**, **New York Daily News**, and **KPCC-FM** featured Birnbaum discussing a paper she co-authored in EHP on flame retardants being detected in some foods.

May 31, **Nature** wrote a story on “Fracking boom spurs environmental audit,” which includes quotes from John Balbus of OD, who was speaking at an Institute of Medicine workshop discussing research strategies for studying the health impacts of gas extraction.

June 18, **Lab Manager Magazine** talked to Birnbaum for the story “Researchers find new risks in low-dose chemical exposure.”

June 19-20, **The Hill** and **The Charleston Gazette** wrote about new legislation introduced to combat illnesses associated with coal pollution, which mentions support for NIEHS to study the public health effects of mountaintop mining projects.

June 22, **BNA** reported on an NTP Board of Scientific Counselors meeting, with its story “NTP advisers say trichloroethylene, cumene high priorities for carcinogenic evaluation.”

June 25, **MedPage Today** highlighted some research funded in part by NIEHS about exercise and cancer risk.

June 28, **UK Progressive** wrote a lengthy piece called “The Dilbit Disaster: Inside the biggest oil spill you’ve never heard of,” which includes quotes from testimony that Scott Masten of DNTP provided to Congress.

June 30, **Down to Earth** magazine developed an extensive piece titled “The New Obesity,” which includes quotes from Jerry Heindel of DERT, several NIEHS grantees, and Retha Newbold, a former employee in DNTP.

July 6, **ABC News** featured the work of Clare Weinberg of DIR and colleagues in the article “Fertility drugs’ link to breast cancer hinges on pregnancy, study says.” **MedPage Today** also featured this study.

July 6, the **NIH Record** featured NIEHS in a story “Future NIH management leaders visit NIEHS.” The story includes quotes from Joellen Austin, NIEHS Executive Officer.

July 7, the **NIH Record** also highlighted the fact that Sandler was elected alumni of an honorary society at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health in “Sandler honored by public health society.”

July 11, **Reuters**, **Chicago Tribune**, and other outlets reported “Estrogen after ovary removal safe for young women,” which includes quotes from Hazel Nichols of DIR.

July 13, the **Baltimore Sun** included quotes from Andrew Rooney of DNTP in its story “New health issues tied to low levels of lead exposure,” which highlights the new NTP monograph on low-level lead.

August 2, **East Bay Express** included quotes from Kris Thayer of DNTP in story titled “Plastics chemicals linked to diabetes in women: Blacks and Hispanics most exposed.”

August 6, **MedPage Today** developed a story “Clues to maternal smoking risks uncovered,” which highlights research led by Stephanie London of DIR.

August 8, the **Durham Herald Sun** featured quotes from Stavros Garantziotis of DIR in its story “Institute opens DNA bank to outside researchers.”

August 14, **The Atlantic** ran a story “In Oregon, residents struggle to solve a pesticide mystery,” which includes quotes from Sue Fenton of DNTP talking about her work with atrazine. The author also developed a [YouTube video](#) called “The Tainted Forest,” which features Fenton among others.

III. PUBLIC INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

Web and Materials Development

Since May, OCPL has developed and disseminated new informational materials including:

- [Dioxins](#) fact sheet
- [Strategic Plan \(booklet\)](#)
- [Strategic Plan \(tri-fold\)](#)
- [New NIEHS overview video](#)
- Four new videos for intranet (Junction) featuring NIEHS staff, as part of our internal communications efforts.

In mid-May, OCPL updated the NIEHS fact sheets and brochures Web page, to make it easier for the public to search by topic area and category. The new page is available at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/health/materials/index.cfm>.

In June, OCPL launched a new intranet (Junction), and in August, updated the look of [NIEHS home page](#) with sliding boxes and a new color scheme.

Media Training and News Writing

OCPL works with NIEHS/NTP staff to help facilitate all media requests. Both formal and informal media coaching is provided before each interview. OCPL brought two experienced media coaches in to provide half-day tailored media training August 9-10, 2012, for 10 NIEHS scientists. The training helped staff become better spokespeople, and provided them with the confidence and skills they need to conduct media interviews.

OCPL also conducted two all-day news writing classes on August 28-29. 50 postdocs and others currently writing for the Environmental Factor and other NIEHS communications participated in the class.

Social Media Efforts

OCPL continues to introduce and maintain new social media tools.

- NIEHS currently reaches about 4,000 [Twitter](#) followers and approximately 700,000 second-order followers.
- Newly branded [Facebook](#) and [YouTube](#) sites have been developed.
- NIEHS currently reaches 130,800 Facebook users
- NIEHS YouTube channel has received about 4,000 video views
- Starting preliminary work to design and test NIEHS' first mobile application

Outreach

Planning Virtual Forum on Children's Obesity and the Environment. OCPL and the Office of Science Education and Diversity are co-leading a virtual forum to be held November 29 from 2:00-3:30 p.m. The topic for the discussion will be childhood obesity and related environmental contributors. Birnbaum will be joined by Thayer, Gregory Diette of Johns Hopkins University, Lawrence Kushi of Kaiser Permanente, Karen Peterson of the University of Michigan, and Andrew Rundle of Columbia University, for a moderated panel discussion and Q&A session with the public. This virtual forum is intended to complement the community forums that NIEHS has hosted around the country, and our goal is to use Web and social media to reach a new audience. The panelists will respond to questions that come in from the Web, email, and Twitter.

Exhibits. OCPL provided support for the NIEHS exhibit at the International Society for Environmental Epidemiology conference in Columbia, S.C., August 26-31. OCPL has also developed a new exhibit banner that NIEHS staff can use to showcase NIEHS materials at meetings.

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. The number of subscribers to the newsletter continues to increase. The Environmental Factor is also recognized as a place for postdocs and other NIEHS staff, interested in writing, to gain experience and receive mentoring from OCPL on science communications.

Public Inquiries

OCPL responds to approximately 80 public inquiries per month, received by phone, mail, and email. The questions range from concerns about electromagnetic fields (EMFs) to requests for educational materials and referrals to environmental health clinics.

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