



A NOTE FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

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CEHN EVENTS:

September 7
DC: CEHN 20th Anniversary Gala at the National Press Club

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I would like to be a Sponsor

Happy summer to all of you! As part of CEHN's 20th Anniversary year, we have completed with some great events. May 30th-June 1st, CEHN hosted a successful and exciting research conference, "The Contributions of Epigenetics to Pediatric Environmental Health," in San Francisco, CA. We hosted close to 170 people in attendance, including participants from 19 countries. CEHN would like to thank the many conference sponsors, partners, and Planning Committee members who helped us make the conference a reality. More details on this recent event can be found on our [conference website](#).

On June 11th, CEHN hosted a Congressional Briefing focused on the past, present, and future opportunities before us in the field of children's environmental health. We had the support of some fantastic partners which helped to also make that event quite engaging and successful. I encourage you to read more about those events in this newsletter below.

In addition to the various program work in which CEHN is engaged, we are also working hard on the preparations for our [20th Anniversary Gala and Award Event!](#) This will be a formal affair where we take the opportunity to highlight and celebrate

our accomplishments and lessons learned in the past as well as energize ourselves for the work still ahead of us.

We want to see all of you at the National Press Club in Washington, DC, on Friday, September 7th. Please circulate the information about this event widely!

I am happy to pass along that CEHN has received a grant from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation to update some key resources, support key advocacy work, and assist with strengthening our partnerships with the Children's Research Centers of Excellence. CEHN remains very grateful to the W.K. Kellogg Foundation for their support of CEHN over the last 4 years!

Finally, we would like to welcome Veronica Tinney to CEHN! Veronica is working as a Graduate Student Assistant with CEHN this summer and has already provided us with a great amount of support to our programs and events.

Enjoy and thank you for your continued support of CEHN!

*-Nsedu O. Witherspoon, MPH
 CEHN Executive Director*

EHCC Upcoming Presentations and Meetings:

August 8-9

KY: Infant-Toddler Institute

August 9

OK: EHCC Train-the-Trainer

August 13

IN: EHCC Train-the-Trainer

September 19

GA: EHCC Train-the-Trainer

Additional Eco-Healthy Child
Care® events listed [here](#).

SAVE HEALTHY HOMES AND LEAD POISONING PREVENTION PROGRAMS!

CDC's Healthy Homes and Lead Poisoning Prevention Program last year suffered a 93% cut -- from \$29 million in Fiscal Year 2011 to \$2 million in FY 2012. Congress is currently setting FY2013 funding levels, and needs to hear NOW from supporters of this vital program, which provides funding to 35 state and local lead programs working to eliminate elevated blood lead levels among young children.

The Senate bill currently provides \$10 million for the program in FY 2013; the House version has not yet been introduced. For more information on how to help restore funding for this vital program, [click here](#), or go to www.nchh.org and click on 'speaking out' at the bottom of the first paragraph.

GO OUTSIDE AND PLAY!

A recent survey found that children in the U.S. spend more than 7 hours a day with electronic media. Research also shows that children's time spent in unstructured outdoor play has decreased in the U.S. by 50% since 1981. This lack of outdoor time has had serious impacts on children's health. More than a third of U.S. youth are overweight or obese, putting them at higher risk for type-2 diabetes and asthma. Indeed, 3,600 children are diagnosed with type-2 diabetes each

year, 7 million have asthma, and approximately 5.4 million have ADHD. Consider too, that indoor air quality is often worse than outdoor air.

Take advantage of these long summer days by getting outside and being active with your children. Youth who spend more time outdoors are less likely to be overweight, and spending time in nature can lessen symptoms of ADHD, reduce anxiety and stress, and improve sleep. Learn more [online](#).

CLIMATE CHANGE AND THE INDOOR ENVIRONMENT

Climate change affects not only the outdoor environment, but also the indoor environment. Through changes in indoor air quality, the following can be affected: moisture levels, thermal stress, harboring of pests and ventilation use. Though climate change may not create new indoor air hazards, the changing climate will exacerbate existing indoor environment problems in buildings that were designed to withstand milder climates. Extreme weather can impact indoor air through the wearing away of physical barriers between the outside and the inside of buildings,

allowing for moisture to enter a space. Increased presence of water indoors may lead to bacteria and fungi growth as well as release chemicals present in building materials.

What to Do?

The Institutes of Medicine recommends that when moisture accumulation is discovered, the source should be identified and eliminated as soon as possible to prevent bacteria and fungi growth.

What our
EHCC Train-the-Trainer
participants say about
our program

*"Thank you!
I LOVED the training. It was
really good. I was surprised at
how much information stuck in
my memory banks.
Thanks again!"*

*"Needed for all
in this profession"*

*"Very informative training;
makes a person more aware of
changes that can be made to
move towards an eco-healthy
environment"*



Courtesy of FreeDigitalPhotos

CEHN RESEARCH CONFERENCE UPDATES

Approximately 170 experts in epigenetics, environmental health and pediatrics gathered for the CEHN research conference, *The Contribution of Epigenetics in Pediatric Environmental Health*, on May 30 – June 1. Held at the Stanford Court Renaissance Hotel on Nob Hill, participants were treated to the charm of downtown San Francisco as well as to a robust program. The latter included 5 keynote addresses, 24 poster presentations, and 8 mini-symposiums covering topics ranging from biomarkers, the role of nutrition and epigenetics in human health, mechanisms, environmental epigenetics: from mice to humans, critical windows of early exposure and sensitivity, and the association between epigenetics and pediatric exposures and pediatric disease.

Time on June 1 was dedicated to discussion of how to move research into public action with a special policy breakfast meeting and final panel entitled Future Directions and Policy Implications. We hope that the stimulating research and discussions will inspire continued research and facilitate exciting new collaborations across disciplines.

The relatively new field of epigenetics is growing rapidly as scientists strive to understand the etiology of chronic disease and how the environment may influence heritable patterns of gene expression. The conference highlighted the role of epigenetics in determining the impact of the environment on pediatric disease and children's current and future health.

NEW LEAD "REFERENCE VALUE"

In May of 2012, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) revised its approach to lead exposure in children in order to emphasize "primary" prevention: preventing lead exposure for all children whenever possible.

How is this different from the past?

We now know that there is no safe level of lead exposure for children—any exposure can harm cognitive development. Today, CDC will no longer use the term "level of concern." CDC has established a "reference value" to help health workers identify children who have the highest levels of lead exposure.

For decades, the CDC set a "level of concern" for lead as measured in blood tests for children under six. If a child were discovered to have a "level of concern,"

parents would be informed and medical action taken. In 1960, the level was set at 60 micrograms per deciliter ($\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$) – a level that we now know to be life-threatening. The "level of concern" decreased over the years, as research found health effects of lead exposure in children at lower and lower levels. Before the recent decision, the "level of concern" was set at 10 $\mu\text{g}/\text{dL}$.

In the past, this type of "secondary" approach meant that no action would be taken until a child's lead level reached the "level of concern" cut-off. The increased emphasis on a "primary" preventive approach means that we shouldn't wait to act; it places a greater focus on education and other actions to prevent lead exposure whenever possible.

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NEW LEAD “REFERENCE VALUE” (cont’d)

How was 5 µg/dL chosen as a reference value?

Thirty years ago, lead levels in children were much higher on average, due to lead in gasoline and house paint. In the most recent national survey, 2.5% of children (450,000 kids) measured above 5 µg/dL. As we get better at preventing lead exposure, the children in that top percentile should have lower levels of lead—and the “reference value” will be revised down.

This threshold gives public health workers a starting point—at this level, it’s time to alert the parents and take action to find the source of exposure. The goal is to make sure a child’s levels don’t grow any higher. Programs vary from state to state, but a blood lead level at or above the reference value should lead to an

investigation into the sources of lead exposure in a child’s environment and monitoring of the blood lead levels by medical staff.

What happens when a child’s blood lead levels are above the 5 µg/dL reference value?

If a child’s blood tests show lead at a concentration of 5 µg/dL, or higher then they are among the 2.5% of children in the U.S. with the highest lead exposure. This cut-off should trigger a search for sources of lead exposure, careful monitoring of the child’s lead levels, and education about preventing exposure.

For more information click [here](#).

POLICY ACTIVITIES



From left to right: Ms. Nsedu Obot Witherspoon, Dr. Jerome Paulson, Dr. Cynthia Bearer, Dr. Lynn Goldman

The Network held a very successful briefing for Congressional staff in June. Three terrific speakers presented on “Children’s Environmental Health: Past, Present, and Future” to an impressive standing-room-only crowd. Thanks to Cynthia Bearer, Lynn Goldman, and Jerome Paulson for their presentations, and thanks to the many organizations who helped the Network provide lunch and who sponsored the briefing. CEHN Executive Director Nse Witherspoon moderated.