

**Collaborative on Health & the Environment – Washington (CHE-WA)**

**Meeting Notes**

**Antioch University Seattle**

**Wednesday, October 19, 2005**

**2:00 – 4:30 p.m.**

***Tentative Next Meeting Date***

Thursday, January 19, 2006, from 2:00-4:00 p.m. (will be confirmed closer to the time)

***In Attendance***

Gail Alexander, Antioch University Seattle

Morgan Barry, Public Health – Seattle and King County

Mary Bartholet, Washington State Nurses Association

Madeline Berry, Washington State Department of Health

Nanda Blazej, Antioch University Seattle and Cascadia Consulting

Marnie Boardman, Washington State Department of Health

Mike Cox, City of Seattle, Office of Sustainability

Carol Dansereau, Farm Workers Pesticides Project

Kate Davies, Antioch University Seattle

Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters

Diane Dent, Washington Department of Ecology

Ticiang Diangson, Seattle Public Utilities

Steve Gilbert, Institute for Neurotoxicology and Neurological Disorders

Sally Goodwin, medical doctor

Linn Gould, Erda Environmental Consulting

Donna Keller, Public Health – Seattle and King County

Jane Koenig, University of Washington, School of Public Health and Community Medicine

Suellen Mele, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Elise Miller, Institute for Children's Environmental Health and coordinator for CHE-WA

Sharon Reilly, Institute for Children's Environmental Health

Janna Rolland, board member, Institute for Children's Environmental Health

Marianne Seifert, concerned citizen

Margaret Shield, concerned citizen

Gregg Small, Washington Toxics Coalition

Kery Sturgill, concerned citizen

Rini Sulaiman, UN International Development Organization, Global Mercury Project

Pam Tazioli, Breast Cancer Fund

Jim Todd, Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation

Heather Trim, People for Puget Sound

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## Introductions

**Elise Miller, coordinator of CHE-WA and facilitator for the meeting,** welcomed the group, and participants introduced themselves. Elise then noted that Shelley Vendiola, who was to speak at this meeting and is with the Indigenous Women's Network and based in Bellingham, was unable to come after all because an urgent matter at work had suddenly come up. Shelley sent her apologies and regrets and hopes to be able to present at one of the next quarterly meetings.

### **Elise then briefly reviewed CHE-WA's mission for newcomers:**

CHE-WA's overarching goal is to promote the cross-pollination of ideas and opportunities between different sectors concerned with environmental contributors to chronic health problems in order to create a safe and healthy future for all in the Northwest. CHE-WA itself does not support any specific campaigns, but instead encourages initiatives that benefit all those participating, particularly via its working groups which currently focus on collecting health data in Washington State related to environmental concerns, incorporating the precautionary principle into local and state plans and resolutions, and integrating and implementing environmental justice guidelines into all activities in state agencies and other organizations alike. Since scientific research is the cornerstone for all of our work, CHE-WA always has a relevant science update at every meeting.

### **CHE-WA Working Group Updates:**

- The Environmental Justice Working Group will meet on **Tuesday, November 8** from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Antioch University, Room 117.
- The Precautionary Principle Working Group will meet on **Thursday, December 8** from 2:00-4:00 p.m. at Antioch University, Room 201A.
- The Research & Information Working Group met on October 19 (notes available on CHE-WA web site at <http://washington.chenw.org>). The next meeting has not been scheduled.

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## Science Update

Jane Koenig, PhD, professor of Environmental and Occupational Health Sciences in the School of Public Health and Community Medicine at the University of Washington (UW), presented her latest research on health effects of particulate matter.

*(Copies of Jane Koenig's PowerPoint presentation and two handouts on related research studies in Washington are available on the website: <http://washington.chenw.org/meetings.html>. In addition, Dr. Koenig suggested this article on air pollution and cardiovascular disease: <http://circ.ahajournals.org/cgi/content/full/109/21/2655>.)*

Jane has been involved with research on the health effects of air pollution, and through this research she naturally became involved with people who have asthma. Asthma is a good indicator for effects from air pollution, although non-asthmatics can also feel effects.

A few of her studies have been done using hospital data, such as the number of people who come in for asthma-related health problems. This information was then analyzed in conjunction with air-pollution data to find out if there was an association between increases in air pollution and the number of hospital visits for asthma. She found that there was an association in people under the age of 65.

Another way to assess effects of air pollution is to collect exhaled breath and look for levels of nitrous oxide (NO). This is a simple and non-invasive test. Researchers found that no matter what techniques were used for monitoring NO, all subjects had increased levels. NO is relatively easy to test and yields very important information.

Jane also explained about another UW study in which researchers are measuring children's NO levels as they ride diesel buses. Researchers are going to children's homes and measuring NO before they ride the bus, then while they're on the bus, and then again when they get home.

**Question:** Indoor air pollution is often seen as the most significant contributor to asthma. Given this, is it as necessary to look at outdoor data?

**Response:** Jane referred everyone to the last study mentioned in her handout (see PDF on web site). We know that about 75% of the outdoor particles generated in the winter end up filtering back into the home. There is then not really a big difference between *indoor* and *outdoor* air quality.

Another UW environmental health researcher is analyzing the respiratory health of students at Cleveland High School (in Seattle) who run on their track, which happens to be right near Highway I-5. Given their findings to date, which suggest that the health of these students is impacted negatively, there is some interest in working to pass legislation that requires new schools must be built a certain distance away from the freeway.

Jane also mentioned that there is currently a study being done in London where researchers are restricting diesel traffic and looking at air quality to see if there is an association. She noted that during the Olympic Games in Atlanta several years ago, there was a significant decrease in the number of hospitalizations due to asthma and respiratory problems because car and truck traffic was highly restricted.

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### **Schools and the Department of Health's New Rule**

Marianne Seifert talked about the Department of Health's (DOH) environmental health rule revision regarding primary and secondary schools. This is a good opportunity to have impact on school environmental health rules. DOH is currently developing a final draft rule. The public can have input until mid-January or during the official comment period.

For more information about the rule and DOH's revision process, visit <http://www.doh.wa.gov/ehp/ts/school.htm>.

Comments should be directed to Nancy Bernard ([nancy.bernard@doh.wa.gov](mailto:nancy.bernard@doh.wa.gov), 360-236-3072) or Ned Therien ([ned.therien@doh.wa.gov](mailto:ned.therien@doh.wa.gov)).

Marianne suggested that several colleagues working more closely on this issue might speak further on this topic further at the next CHE-WA meeting in January 2006.

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### **Farm Worker Pesticide Project (FWPP)**

Carol Dansereau, JD, executive director of FWPP, provided some background information and then an update on FWPP's latest activities and initiatives. There are hundreds of thousands of farm workers in this state; the largest percentage from Mexico. This is a huge environmental justice situation because of issues of poverty, racism, language barriers, immigration, etc. FWPP formed to focus on this problem for the state and works to reduce pesticide exposures and use. The ultimate goal of FWPP is to bring about safer ways to grow food in the state.

There are various ways farm workers and their families are exposed: handling, mixing, applying, drift, packing houses, schools, children/families exposed through parents bringing pesticides home on clothing and on their skin and hair, prenatal exposures, etc.

This is one of the most invisible issues in the state because environmental justice is not prioritized. The majority of farm workers don't necessarily report that they are getting sick from pesticide exposures because they are not encouraged to do so and fear that they may lose their jobs if they are seen as "complaining." The Grower's Association currently doesn't help in terms of getting media exposure or focusing on issues.

FWPP is trying first and foremost to make these issues visible through taking data "off the shelf," getting publicity, and telling farm workers' stories through media venues. They have been working pretty aggressively with news media, increasing visibility so as to create momentum for reform and open discussion. National Geographic recently spent a few days with Carol and a local farm worker and an article may come out on these issues in November 2006.

Carol mentioned there was a phase-out bill for pesticides in the last legislative session that did not pass. However, they did have a hearing and legislators expressed high level of interest. FWPP is looking towards the 2006 legislative session.

FWPP has proposed a state rule that would require growers to give 48-hour written notice to hospitals, schools and day care centers before pesticide applications. For more information, visit [www.fwpp.org](http://www.fwpp.org) or [http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/Airblast\\_Sprayer.htm](http://agr.wa.gov/PestFert/Pesticides/Airblast_Sprayer.htm). Carol welcomes feedback on this proposed rule. Carol also noted that ultimately she intends to transfer her position as director to the local workers, since it is important that they feel empowered to provide the ongoing leadership on these issues.

**Question:** What are the legal requirements for showers/hygiene stations in the fields or packing houses?

**Response:** There are requirements for mixers, loaders, etc. Not sure about packing houses. Enforcement is a major problem in trying to make sure there is adequate equipment.

Carol also mentioned there is an exemplary organic farm in eastern Washington. Carol has more information if anyone wants to visit this farm. Everyone is encouraged to purchase locally grown, organic produce.

Carol can be reached at 206-729-0498 or [cdansereauFWPP@earthlink.net](mailto:cdansereauFWPP@earthlink.net).

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## Messaging Discussion

Elise Miller first described the impetus for having this discussion, noting that a number of colleagues had been involved in conversations about Dr. George Lakoff's analysis of how Progressives and the Radical Right frame messages, and what Progressives might do to more effectively engage people through language and values. In addition, she and Steve Gilbert had been trying to reach John James Bell with SmartMeme about setting up a CHE-WA training on this subject, but had not been able to arrange for that yet. In lieu of such a training, CHE-WA members had expressed strong interest in discussing how we might frame environmental health messages that could be utilized for various audiences and constituencies.

Elise noted that the questions to address in our discussion were: How can we most effectively engage colleagues and the public about environmental health issues via our respective agencies and organizations? What has worked and what hasn't worked? Elise then invited Jane and Carol to speak to these questions to the whole group.

Jane Koenig's examples:

- *Successes* – One of the successful outreach projects was convincing the legislature that wood smoke was harmful to people. Trying to get legislature to require that only EPA-approved woodstoves were sold in the state. Also asked for burn-bans at certain times. Those initiatives were passed. Success was getting physicians to tell legislature that kids' health was being affected. Also helped to provide the scientific data linking wood smoke and cancer.
- *Not as successful* – Though we were successful in getting the legislation passed in regards to wood smoke, the message was not necessarily sustainable. Ongoing education is necessary for people to continue to make appropriate behavioral changes.

Carol Dansereau's examples:

- *Successes* – Visual graphics and putting actual faces to issues are very helpful. For example, Dr. Elizabeth Guillette's research in Mexico, which shows the drawings from kids who were exposed to pesticides versus those that were not, continues to be used as a very powerful graphic. With FWPP, Carol noted that the visual of a fetus in utero being exposed has proven effective among the farm workers and their families. Biomonitoring—that is, measuring the levels of synthetic chemicals in their bodies, is also a very powerful tool.

- *Not as successful* – Written materials are of limited value to farm workers themselves. Technical language can be challenging and there is not always a simpler way to explain things.

Participants then met in small groups to discuss their own success stories when it comes to messaging. The groups reported the following guidelines for communicating effective environmental health messages:

- *Identify the audiences' values and connect messages with those values.*
- *Make messages reach people on a personal level on real terms – this is about them, their families, their kids, their communities.*
- *Develop economic analyses and put messages in terms of costs (and cost savings).*
- *Convey the messages effectively by having the “right” messengers.*
- *Use the appropriate medium for conveying the message, i.e. visual brochures, videos, stickers, other things that people find more engaging than long narratives.*
- *Keep the message simple; translate scientific info into non-scientific language in engaging terms.*
- *Consider how messages connect with broader issues and people's vision for a healthy future so that policymakers see how environmental health fits with other concerns of their constituencies.*
- *Understand the social and historical context of communities and what people really care about. For example, people now are concerned with security, flu, etc., not necessarily environmental health, so we need to help them make the link.*
- *Empower people so they know they can make choices that will help their families and communities.*
- *Provide examples of models that work and of people doing the right thing.*
- *Phrase things positively and provide alternatives so issues do not seem to overwhelming.*
- *Make sure terms such as “environmental health” or “environmental justice” are relatable terms that make sense to various audiences.*
- *Draw on people who are well-known in society that people look up to who will share personal stories.*
- *Draw on “everyday” individuals who have made a difference within their communities because people trust them to spread messages.*
- *Use graphics, visuals and props and not just words as much as possible.*
- *Engage people in ways that they are inspired to take action. Instead of telling them what to do and how, empower them so they want to make that change.*

Many of the small groups came up with variations on the same themes. Overall, the group agreed that we cannot give people the facts and expect change; instead, we have to speak to people in their language and from the heart, and use visuals that are immediately impactful.

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### **Next meeting:**

We are now planning to hold the next CHE-WA quarterly meeting on **Thursday, January 19, 2006** (not on the 18th as was suggested as a possibility at our meeting) from 2:00-4:00 p.m. We will confirm closer to the time.

Suggested topics to cover at the January meeting:

- Schools project (Marianne Seifert and colleagues)
- Toxicology presentation as great visual (Steve Gilbert)
- Pharmaceuticals take-back project update (Washington Citizens for Resource Conservation)
- Presentation by Anne Steinemann, PhD, Professor of Civil and Environmental Engineering and Public Affairs, Evans Schools, UW; Specialization areas: Environmental planning, policy and impact assessment, public sector economics, environmental valuation, water resources and drought management, sustainability
- Presentation by Shelley Vendiola, Indigenous Women's Network