

**Collaborative on Health and the Environment (CHE)
Follow-up Meeting
University of Washington Health Sciences Building
April 29, 2003
Meeting Notes**

Participants:

Chetana Acharya, UW's Center for Ecogenetics and Environmental Health
Trudy Bialic, PCC Natural Markets
Carol Dansereau, Farmworker Pesticides Strategies
Elizabeth Davis, League of Women Voters
Ticiang Diangson, Seattle Public Utilities
Robin Evans-Agnew, American Lung Association of WA State
Sally Goodwin, medical doctor and member of Physicians for Social Responsibility
Linn Gould, Erda Environmental Consulting and master's student at UW
Marianne Guidchard, Washington State Dept of Health
Bruce Herbert, Newground Investments
Dick Jackson, National Center for Environmental Health, CDC
Karen McDonell, Board member, Washington Toxics Coalition
Nancy McKay, Russell Family Fund
Elise Miller, Institute for Children's Environmental Health
Lin Nelson, Professor of Environmental Studies at Evergreen State College
Pat Noonan, American Parkinson's Disease Association
Kathy Schiffman, researcher at UW with interest in Parkinsons
Rachel Severson, graduate student at Antioch University in Seattle
Marina Silverstone, Washington State Department of Health
Laurie Valeriano, Washington Toxics Coalition
Maria Victoria Peeler, Washington State Department of Ecology
Krista Voigt, Endometriosis Association on Whidbey Island
Clark Williams-Derry, Northwest Environment Watch
Connie Winslow, medical doctor working at Boehringer Ingelheim, a pharmaceutical company based in Germany with family on Whidbey Island.

Notes:

The meeting began with everyone introducing themselves. Dr. Richard (Dick) Jackson, the director of the CDC's National Center for Environmental Health came for the first part of the meeting. He first gave some background on his professional interests. He also discussed the results of the recently published CDC biomonitoring report (the second in a series) and some of the changes to be expected for the next one. For instance, some volatile organic chemicals and mercury will be included in the next screen. Breast milk analysis is also currently being discussed beyond the usual blood samples that are taken. Specific metabolites for organophosphates and speciated arsenic will be included. Dick also mentioned that the CDC has a

new website page on DES--see www.cdc.gov. Plus, more information on the built environment and health can be found at: www.cdc.gov/healthyplaces.

He mentioned the two big areas of concern regarding environmental health areas in his mind were water source pollution and non-renewable energy usage (industrial emissions and car/truck emissions). He also suggested, in response to a question, that shareholder activism could be another important way to help prompt business and industry to choose less toxic alternatives.

When asked his advice on how a group as diverse as the budding CHE group in the room – with representatives from different health-affected groups, research, medicine, community-based activists, and government agencies – might start working collaboratively, he shared an example of a community dialogue in Peru. The outcome of that dialogue and his recommendation was to choose one or two areas that all groups could focus on initially – once there was successful movement on those issues, then they could better leverage other changes.

Dr. Jackson needed to leave early and the meeting was then focused on how this group might proceed.

The discussion primarily centered on participants highlighting their particular interests and strategies. The questions that were addressed were:

- What kind of group do we want to be? A forum to understand the complexities of the issues or a proactive entity targeting specific issues and policies?
- What kinds of issues might we prioritize (i.e., what might be the "low-hanging fruit")?
- What are practical structures that we need to put in place in order to grow this collaborative (e.g., how often do we meet? conference calls? etc.)

A lively discussion followed. Examples of issues that were discussed:

- 1) Several people mentioned focusing on health affected groups to let them know about current research and opportunities to weigh in on specific legislation. Education is key and these groups can be a powerful advocacy force since they also provide an emotional connection, which is very important to move people towards change. Farm worker's children, learning disability groups and other examples were discussed as offering opportunities for outreach to health-affected groups as well as for moving public and policymaker opinion.
- 2) Another theme was working locally to effect change. One example was on working with a school board to provide organic food at school cafeterias.
- 3) A suggestion was made for a historical research analysis looking at various illnesses/conditions before and after the introduction of pesticides in farming in the 1940s.
- 4) The fish advisory was discussed and the impact on women and children, particularly those in immigrant populations, who aren't aware of the health impacts of exposures to

mercury and PCBs in fish. It was suggested that environmental justice organizations have done a much better job documenting and getting the word out about advisories.

- 5) One participant noted how the available funding for cancer was primarily focused on treatment and not on prevention (ex., Run for the Cure). How might we get more of this money and energy focused on prevention?
- 6) A suggestion was made to focus CHE's energies addressing the farmworker's children illnesses since this the links are well established and this would allow broadening the focus to include pesticide use overall.
- 7) A suggestion was made to pick an issue that is pertinent to pending legislation, which would require both education and advocating for particular policies. Since some people in the group can only do education and can't press on policy issues, the group agreed that we should have a two-pronged approach that would allow different groups to contribute in different, but complementary ways. Along these lines, Linda Park mentioned that her foundation is interested in putting together a public seminar series on human health and environmental health (perhaps at Town Hall) and the possibility of partnering with CHE on this. The group agreed that would be an excellent contribution to this effort.
- 8) There was also general agreement that the this kind of meeting was a great opportunity to meet people from different organizations and sectors and valuable for networking and information sharing information.
- 9) In terms of suggested focus areas, two major themes emerged:
 - a. health impact of pesticide exposures (there is incredibly strong data and it can be community-based as well as pertinent to policies)
 - b. water source pollution (something that Dick Jackson also emphasized)

These and other ideas will be discussed further at the next face-to-face meeting to be held in June.

Film Presentation

Maria Victoria Peeler then presented a draft of a short video (15 minutes) on pesticide use, produced by John deGraafe for the Department of the Ecology. The film will target high school students. Maria asked for feedback as soon as possible. A number of suggestions were made including that the film could provide ideas on what students could do. For instance, petition school boards to eliminate pesticides in and around schools.

There was general agreement that this group would be a great forum for other organizations to present on their initiative to glean feedback from other colleagues in the field.

An announcement: Within the next two weeks the Washington State Department of Transportation will make a decision on road side spraying, and it's an important time to weigh in with your legislator.

The group then adjourned so that participants could attend Dick Jackson's talk on the built environment and health, a lecture hosted by the University of Washington's School of Public Health and the School of Architecture and Urban Planning.

Action Steps

- Write up the notes from this meeting and circulate them.
- The next CHE Seattle meeting is planned for June. There was a request to move the meeting downtown.
- Have the original planning committee and any others who might want to join this small group organize conference calls between face-to-face meetings to move this effort forward more quickly
- Set up a listserv for this group.
- Elise Miller said she would work on all of these suggestions.