

Report to the National Advisory Environmental Health Sciences Council
Director, NIEHS

15–16 February 2012

Director's Message

The NIEHS Strategic Planning process met many milestones over the past several months. In October, a Strategic Planning workshop was held here in RTP comprised of senior leadership and staff along with external scientific stakeholders. The outcome of this intensive working meeting was a draft mission statement, vision statement, and supporting pillars on which the strategic plan will be built. This has been further fleshed out by, senior leadership, who has worked with each of the institute divisions to develop Strategic Goals under each pillar.

Draft Mission statement: The mission of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences is to discover how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives.

Draft Vision statement: The vision of the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences is to provide global leadership for innovative research that improves public health by preventing disability and disease from our environment.

Supporting Pillars: Fundamental Research, Exposure Research, Translational Science, Global Environmental Health and Health Disparities, Training and Education, Communications and Engagement. Crosscutting themes: Knowledge Management and Collaborative and Integrative Approaches.

These drafts are posted for public comment through the end of February.

Regarding staff updates, I'm pleased to share with you that Dr. William Copeland has been named Chief of the Laboratory of Molecular Genetics. Dr. Copeland, who has been at NIEHS since 1993, leads the LMG's Mitochondrial Replication Group. Also, our search for a permanent Clinical Director is advancing with candidate seminars and interviews completed last week.

There are three other significant initiatives, one at NIH and two here at NIEHS, which I particularly would like to share with you. The first is a new policy by NIH to coordinate IC logos and branding. A survey conducted by NIH showed that 64% of those surveyed did not know where the nation's medical or health research was conducted, and only 1% of them identified NIH as this place. Adding to the confusion are the separate logos and identities of the 27 ICs. As public recognition increases public support and appropriations, there is a need to increase understanding of what NIH is and does. NIH is undertaking an initiative to create a single NIH logo that can be adapted by each IC (by adding its name).

The second initiative I would like to announce is that *Environmental Health Perspectives* will be going to an electronic-only version by January 2013. By going paperless, the

journal will make substantial savings in both funds and natural resources, and will become a very visible example of our commitment at NIEHS to sustainability. This action is also in line with the President’s November Executive Order 13589: Promoting Efficient Spending, that calls for a 20% reduction across the Federal Government in the combined costs of travel, conferences, food, promotional items, fleet usage, and printing. You can read about our other environmental stewardship efforts in the latest [NIEHS Sustainability Report](#), which was recently published on our website.

Third, NIEHS is engaged in an initiative to assess and improve our organizational climate called the NIEHS PULSE Survey and Action Plan. The Institute plan is being implemented in three specific areas: Communication, Career Development and Training, and Staff Recognition and Promotion. The most visible of these may be the development of a new Intranet website (The Junction) to improve the flow of information up and down the chain of command. The site is expected to be fully implemented in June of this year.

I would like to acknowledge the recent passing of one of NIEHS’s most dedicated employees, Dr. Kamal Abdo, on December 22. Dr. Abdo, who was a 25-year veteran of the NTP and retired in 2005, was a leader in the field of toxicology and a true champion of public health.

FY 2012 Budget and 2013 Appropriations

	<u>FY 2009 Appropriation</u>	<u>FY 2010 Appropriation</u>	<u>FY 2011 Full-Year CR</u>	<u>FY2012 Appropriation</u>
<u>NIH</u>	<u>\$ 30,545,098,000</u>	<u>\$ 31,008,788,000</u>	<u>\$ 30,687,290,000</u>	<u>\$30,631,986,000</u>
<u>NIEHS</u>	<u>\$ 662,820,000</u>	<u>\$ 689,781,000</u>	<u>\$ 683,724,312</u>	<u>\$685,571,000</u>
<u>Superfund</u>	<u>\$ 78,074,000</u>	<u>\$ 79,212,000</u>	<u>\$ 79,053,576</u>	<u>\$ 78,928,000</u>
<u>NIEHS/DOE Training</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,000</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,000</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,000</u>	<u>\$ 10,000,000</u>

In this table, you can see a comparison of NIEHS funding over the last three years, with FY2012 appropriations, and with that of NIH as a whole. Although overall NIH funding fell, NIEHS funding has a slight increase in 2012, but down somewhat from FY2010. Superfund appropriations have dropped slightly for the second year. NIEHS/DOE Training funds remain a constant. At this point in time, all of the information we have on FY2013 appropriations is what is called for in the President's Budget.

Legislative Report

The FY2012 Labor, HHS, Education Consolidated Appropriations Act was signed by the President on December 23, 2011. Major features of this bill include the following:

- Elimination of \$300 million Global AIDS Transfer
- Elimination of NCRR
- Creation of the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS), with a budget of \$576,456,000
- Up to \$10 million provided within NCATS for the Cures Acceleration Network (CAN)
- At least \$487,767,000 provided within NCATS for the Clinical and Translational Science Awards (CTSAs); the same amount as requested in the FY2012 President's Budget request
- Common Fund is provided \$ 545,962,000
- Continuation of the National Children's Study is \$193,880,000
- An across-the-board 'haircut' for NIH and other discretionary programs of 0.189 percent

The Appropriations Report that accompanied the bill included some specific items:

- Congress asked that the NIH budget keep extramural spending at close to 90% of its overall budget and continue to support basic research.
- Congress also included some feedback about the process by which NCATS was created, that it "caused unnecessary uncertainty about the proposal and contributed to the impression that it was being rushed." They also wanted to make sure that the NCATS mission and activities would complement rather than compete with the private sector.
- With respect to the NCATS process, Congress was concerned that NIH would employ "lessons learned" from that process as it moves forward with the efforts of the Science Management Review Board on the development of a consolidated institute on substance use, abuse and addiction.

NIEHS received two report language items in the Senate Appropriations Report. One item was a general acknowledgement of the importance of environmental influences in health and disease. The other item was a request for NIEHS to consider examining effects of volcanic emissions and other natural environmental hazards on health (especially in Hawaii).

Science Advances

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NIEHS News and Highlights

Autism and Neurotoxicology

The Institute has participated in a number of important activities lately to move the fields of autism research and neurotoxicology forward. In October, NIEHS and EHP were among the sponsors of the 27th International Neurotoxicology Conference, held in RTP. The meeting, *Environmentally Triggered Neurodevelopmental Disorders: Focus on Endocrine Disruption and Sex Differences in Autism, ADHD, and Schizophrenia*, focused on elucidating the commonalities among these disorders and their potential environmental causes. At the meeting, Dr. Theo Colborn was presented with the Theo Colborn Award by Dr. Linda Birnbaum, for her pioneering research on endocrine disrupting chemicals believed to interfere with hormonal development.

In November, we sponsored a meeting, *Bioinformatics and Computational Approaches to Integrate Genes and Environment in Autism Research*. This meeting, organized by Dr. Cynthia Lawler, brought together experts in bioinformatics, computational biology and small molecule screening paradigms with key researchers in the genomics, epigenomics, and the neurobiology of autism to discuss the possibilities for applying new bioinformatics and screening tools to research on environmental contributors to autism.

In November, Dr. Valerie Hu from the George Washington University School of Medicine and Health Sciences, delivered the Keystone Science Lecture “An Integrative Genomics Approach toward Understanding, Diagnosis, and Personalized Treatment of Autism Spectrum Disorders,” exploring how genomics data may help to understand the causes, and improve the diagnosis and treatment, of autism spectrum disorders. In January, Dr. Catalina Betancur, from the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research, delivered the Keystone Science Lecture “Deconstructing ‘idiopathic’ autism: One behavioral syndrome, hundreds of genes,” which illustrated how rare defects in many different genes could give rise to a common phenotype diagnosed as autism.

In December, NIEHS and four other NIH ICs launched a data sharing collaboration between the National Database for Autism Research, or NDAR, and the Autism Genetic Resource Exchange, a project of the advocacy group Autism Speaks. This federation of data represents the largest repository to date of genetic, phenotypic, clinical, and medical imaging data related to research on autism spectrum disorders (ASD), including

a portfolio of grants supported by NIEHS for research on environmental factors involved in ASD.

And in January, NIEHS Director Dr. Linda Birnbaum participated in *Environmental Influences on Neurodevelopment* workshop sponsored by Physicians for Social Responsibility, the Autism Society, the Collaborative on Health and the Environment, and the UCLA School of Public Health. The purpose of the meeting was to catalyze cross-discipline discussions among leaders in environmental, experimental and epidemiologic fields as well as those involved in public policy and environmental health advocacy.

National Toxicology Program

In December, the Tox21 program, a collaboration between NIEHS, EPA, and FDA; began using a high-speed robotic screening system to test [10,000 compounds](#) for potential toxicity. The compounds cover a wide variety of classifications, and include consumer products, food additives, chemicals found in industrial processes, and human and veterinary drugs, as well as certain mixtures of chemicals.

In November, 12 grantees received NIEHS funding to develop state of the science rodent studies on the chemical bisphenol A (BPA). The grantees will work in multidisciplinary teams with partners in DIR, NTP, and FDA.

In January, the NTP Interagency Center for the Evaluation of Alternative Toxicological Methods (NICEATM) announced the availability of the report on the *International Workshop on Alternative Methods To Reduce, Refine, and Replace the Use of Animals in Vaccine Potency and Safety Testing: State of the Science and Future Directions*. The report was published as an issue of the journal *Procedia in Vaccinology*, and is available online. Also in January, the NTP released the process by which the Congressionally mandated *Report on Carcinogens* is prepared. This [process](#) is available on the NTP website.

In November, a nine-member independent peer review panel, convened by the NTP reviewed the [Draft NTP Monograph on Health Effects of Low-level Lead](#) and concurred with the overall NTP conclusion that there is sufficient evidence for adverse health effects in children and adults at blood lead levels below 10 and 5 micrograms per deciliter.

Other NTP activities include draft research concepts for studies to be conducted on sulfolane, phenolic benzotriazoles, and trimethylsilyldiazomethane; a concept for a proposed NTP workshop on exposure to permanent hair dyes and cancer; and a report on findings and next steps from the NTP workshop: *The Role of Environmental Chemicals in the Development of Diabetes and Obesity*.

Public Health Leadership

U.S. Deputy Surgeon General Rear Adm. Boris Lushniak, M.D., visited NIEHS on November 2 to present the National Prevention Strategy, which is called for under the Affordable Care Act and was put together by the National Prevention, Health Promotion,

and Public Health Council. The Council is composed of 17 federal agencies and is chaired by U.S. Surgeon General Regina Benjamin. The concept of prevention is key in our new draft Mission, Vision, and Strategic Plan.

NIEHS public health leadership was on display domestically at the American Public Health Association meeting in October. Many key staff took part in the meeting through presentations, discussions, and planning, including of the 100th Anniversary celebration of the association's Environment Section, which was led by Dr. Allen Dearry.

Our commitment to global public health was demonstrated in October when we hosted a joint meeting between NIEHS and the Pan-American Health Organization/World Health Organization sustainable development and environmental health collaborating centers. Organized for NIEHS by Dr. John Balbus and others, the meeting allowed PAHO/WHO members to meet with NIEHS scientific and policy staff around joint areas of interest including children's environmental health, climate change and sustainability, green economy and health, fetal basis of adult disease, environment and infectious agents, and cookstoves. Dr. Balbus also represented HHS on the topic of climate change and public health at the 17th Convention of Parties meeting in Durban, South Africa in December.

In November, Dr. Birnbaum held a Community Forum in Los Angeles hosted by the Southern California Environmental Health Sciences Center at the University of Southern California. The forum focused on "Traffic Pollution and Your Health" and was well attended by community residents.

A National Research Council report co-sponsored by NIEHS introduced a comprehensive, six-step framework for assessing the potential health impact of new policies, plans, and projects. The report, titled *Improving Health in the United States: The Role of Health Impact Assessment* and released in October, offers a holistic approach to determining the potential benefits and risks of public health actions.

Also in October, the NIEHS formalized the relationship between the Superfund Research Program and EPA Office of Superfund Remediation Technology Innovation with a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU). The goal of the MOU is to foster an environment that "promotes the utilization of the research outcomes and knowledge to better serve the nation's environment and human health."

Training and Science Education

The third annual Genomics Day at NIEHS was held to increase awareness of advances in genomic research and of the scope of bioinformatics support at NIEHS.

The NIEHS Worker Education and Training Program held a webinar: *Environmental Justice and Hazardous Waste Worker Training Programs: 15 Years of Investment in Environmental Justice*. Since 1996 the MWTP has trained nearly 5,500 workers.

NIEHS grantee Kathleen Vandiver, PhD, co-director of the community outreach and education core of the MIT Massachusetts Center for Environmental Health Sciences, was inducted into the Massachusetts Hall of Fame for Science Educators in November.

In November, the Office of Science Education and Diversity hosted a science literacy workshop at NIEHS for teachers as part of the North Carolina Association for Biomedical Research's Rx for Science Literacy program.

NIEHS joined with other NIH ICs to issue the nationwide NIH Lessons About Bioscience (LAB) Challenge to bring hands-on science into K-12 classrooms through online submissions of innovative, classroom-ready experiments.

EHP is making use of institute postdoctoral fellows to conduct science education workshops. In the program, run by Bono Sen, trainees get valuable science communication and teaching experience, and the workshops benefit from the presenters' individual expertise and enthusiasm about environmental health science.

NIEHS has launched a redesigned Kids' Website, which gets more than 14 million visits each year. It has been 15 years since the web pages were originally created. Ed Kang in the Office of Communications and Public Liaison led the redesign.

Meetings and Events

Past

- Dr. Linda Birnbaum delivered the keynote address at the GSK Women in Science symposium.
- A January meeting held at NIEHS laid the groundwork for a consortium focused on advancing research in women's reproductive health through understanding of the influence of the environment.
- NIEHS hosted a *Toxicology and Infectious Disease* workshop, organized by Dr. Michael Humble.
- DERT organized two mini-symposia in January: one on epigenetics and one on bisphenol A research.
- NIEHS Senior Medical Advisor Dr. Aubrey Miller organized a first of its kind workshop in the United States on erionite and disease. Erionite is an asbestos-like mineral that is linked to malignant mesothelioma.
- Researchers from the NIEHS nanotechnology Grand Opportunities (Nano GO) program met in December to share their research findings in the final meeting of the program, which began in 2009 with ARRA funding.
- NIEHS and Superfund staff participated in the mHealth Summit, a conference focused on the role of mobile technologies in health. Applications developed for NIEHS to use smartphones to monitor exposures and by the Worker Education and Training Program for first responders were showcased.
- More than 250 researchers, trainees, and colleagues of the NIEHS Superfund Research Program met in Lexington, KY in October for their annual meeting to report recent findings and share information.

- An NIEHS-sponsored workshop in September focused on the challenge of studying the environmental health effects of chemical mixtures.
- The NIEHS-sponsored Standing Committee on the Use of Emerging Science for Environmental Health Decisions of the National Academy of Sciences held a workshop in December on *Emerging Technologies for Measuring Individual Exposomes* featuring institute grantees Stephen Rappaport and Martyn Smith.
- The NIEHS Data Sharing Workshop on February 6-7 gathered information and recommendations from the environmental health science research community and other experts regarding successful approaches and strategies to allow broad data sharing across the field of environmental health sciences in human population studies.
- The NIEHS Superfund Research Program at Duke University held a science symposium: *Early Life Exposures and Later Life Consequences: Mechanisms Underlying Vulnerability*.

Upcoming

- 5th Annual NIH Conference on the Science of Dissemination and Implementation: Research at the Crossroads, March 19-20, 2012, <http://conferences.thehillgroup.com/obssr/di2012/index.html>
- Children's Environmental Health & Disease Prevention Research Meeting, NIH, March 6, 2012, <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/highlight/children/index.cfm>
- Partners in Environmental Public Health 2012 Meeting: *Strengthening a Dynamic Environmental Public Health Network for Tomorrow*, March 7-8, 2012, NIH, <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/news/events/highlight/annual-meeting-2012/index.cfm>
- Environmental Health Science Core Centers Annual Meeting, March 26-29, 2012, Harvard.
- NAS Emerging Science for Environmental Health Decisions: *Individual Variability*, April 18-19, 2012, <http://nas-sites.org/emergingscience/workshops/individual-variability/>

Awards and Recognition

- 8th Annual NIEHS Science Awards Day recognized four intramural scientists and four trainees:
 - Lutz Birnbaumer – Scientist of the Year
 - Scott Williams – Early Career Award
 - Geoffrey Mueller – Outstanding Staff Scientist
 - Donna Baird – Mentor of the Year

- Best Poster Presentations: Shay Covo, Hideki Nakano, and Huiming Gao
 - Best Oral Presentation – Kristin Lichti-Kaiser
- 21 NIEHS fellows were honored with the 2012 NIH Fellows Award for Research Excellence (FARE Award); this is nearly 10% of the awards given among the 21 ICs
- The [NIH Director's Award](#) honors leadership and superior performance for employees in four categories: scientific/medical, technical/clerical/support, administrative, and common fund leadership. NIEHS and NTP employees were singled out for their contributions to the Deepwater Horizon Gulf Oil Spill Response, the GuLF STUDY (Gulf Long-term Follow-up Study), and the NIH PROMIS (Patient Reported Outcomes Measurement Information System) Working Group.
- 2011 Papers of the Year: 23 of 3,000 NIEHS-supported were chosen
- Last round of ONES (Outstanding New Environmental Scientist) Awardees were chosen:
 - [Lauren Aleksunes, Pharm.D., Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor in the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy Department of Pharmacology and Toxicology at Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey
 - [Ulrike Dydak, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor of health sciences in the Purdue University School of Health Sciences, with an adjunct appointment at the Indiana Institute for Biomedical Imaging Sciences at Indiana University School of Medicine
 - [Stacey Harper, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor of nanotoxicology in the Department of Environmental and Molecular Toxicology and the School of Chemical, Biological and Environmental Engineering at Oregon State University
 - [Joel Meyer, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor of environmental toxicology in the Duke University Nicholas School of the Environment
 - [Brandon Pierce, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor of epidemiology in The University of Chicago Department of Health Studies
 - [Christy Porucznik, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor in the University of Utah School of Medicine Public Health Program
 - [Vishal Vaidya, Ph.D.](#), an assistant professor of medicine and environmental health at Harvard Medical School and the Harvard School of Public Health
- Dr. David Eastmond, chair of the NTP Board of Scientific Counselors from the University of California, Riverside, has been named a Ramazzini Fellow.
- Dr. David Eaton from the University of Washington was elected to the Institute of Medicine.
- Mr. Chip Hughes was honored with the National Council for Occupational Safety and Health Tony Mazzocchi Award.

- Ms. Melissa Kerr, an intern for the *Environmental Factor* and student at North Carolina Central University, won the American Chemical Society 2011 Undergraduate Award in Analytical Chemistry
- Dr. Monica Ramirez-Andreotta, a doctoral student at the University of Arizona, received the Karen Wetterhahn Memorial Award
- Dr. Arthur Grollman from the State University of New York at Stonybrook, received the Environmental Mutagen Society (EMS) Award; Dr. Karen Huen received the 2011 EMS top publication by a new investigator.
- Dr. Paul Foster of the NTP has been inducted as a Fellow of the Academy of Toxicological Sciences.
- Former grantee Dr. Louis Guillette, Medical University of South Carolina, received the Heinz Award for his pioneering research on the impact of toxic chemicals on wildlife and human health.
- Former NIEHS Director Dr. Kenneth Olden, CUNY School of Public Health, has received the Richard and Barbara Hansen Leadership Award from the University of Iowa School of Public Health.

News from Building 1

National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences

The NIH has formally established the National Center for Advancing Translational Sciences (NCATS) as a new component of the NIH through FY2012 appropriations. This new center is an important step to speed the delivery of new drugs, diagnostics, and medical devices to patients.

Learning Disabilities Research Centers

The NIH announced funding for four centers to conduct research on the causes and treatment of learning disabilities in children and adolescents. The new Learning Disabilities Research Centers are supported by the NICHD. Award recipients are:

- Colorado Learning Disabilities Research Center at the University of Colorado at Boulder
- Texas Center for Learning Disabilities at the University of Houston
- NIH Multidisciplinary Learning Disabilities Center at Florida State University, Tallahassee
- The Center for Defining and Treating Specific Learning Disabilities in Written Language at the University of Washington, Seattle

NIH Diversity and Data

NIH is seeking public opinion about two different, but important issues facing biomedical research. The Working Group on Diversity in the Biomedical Research Workforce is seeking input on ways the NIH can increase diversity in the biomedical research workforce throughout the various research career stages, particularly with regard to underrepresented minorities, persons with disabilities, and persons from

disadvantaged backgrounds. Input can be submitted electronically through February 24, 2012. http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfi_files/nih_dbrw/add.cfm

The Data and Informatics Working Group is seeking input on policies regarding the management, integration, and analysis of research data and administrative data. The working group has identified a number of important issues to consider, including data standards development, secondary or future use of data, data accessibility, incentives for data sharing, and support needs (e.g., workforce and tool development). Submit your comments or suggestions electronically through March 12, 2012.

http://grants.nih.gov/grants/guide/rfi_files/nih_di/add.cfm