

## In EHP editorial, Birnbaum calls new report mandatory reading

By Eddy Ball

In an [editorial](http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1306695) (<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1306695>) in the April issue of Environmental Health Perspectives, NIEHS and NTP Director Linda Birnbaum, Ph.D., applauded a new report on endocrine disrupting compounds (EDCs), “[State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals - 2012.](http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031_eng.pdf)” ([http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031\\_eng.pdf](http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031_eng.pdf))

Developed in the context of the Inter-Organization Programme for the Sound Management of Chemicals, the report presents an assessment by an international group of experts for the United Nations Environment Program (UNEP) and World Health Organization (WHO). NIEHS provided program support to WHO, through a cooperative agreement.

Among the authors in the working group, that developed the report and [Summary for Decision-Makers](http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2013/pdf-links/EDC%20summary%20layout%20040213-3.pdf), (<http://www.environmentalhealthnews.org/ehs/news/2013/pdf-links/EDC%20summary%20layout%20040213-3.pdf>) were NIEHS Program Administrator Jerry Heindel, Ph.D., and NIEHS grantees Tracey Woodruff, Ph.D., of the University of California, San Francisco, and Thomas Zoeller, Ph.D., of the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Heindel and Zoeller also served as editors. Several other NIEHS grantees contributed specific sections to the main document (see [text box](#)).

“Over the last decade, there have been significant advances in our understanding of endocrine disrupting chemicals (EDCs) — their numbers, mechanisms of actions, biological effects, and their impacts on human and wildlife health,” Birnbaum wrote. “It [the new report] is an important source of data on EDCs and should be mandatory reading for everyone who is interested in protecting and improving human health.”

### A global problem that needs global solutions

Key concerns in the report stem from three strands of evidence:

- The high incidence and increasing trends of many endocrine-related disorders in humans, not only in the U.S., but across the globe. “It is now impossible to examine an unexposed population anywhere on earth,” Birnbaum observed.
- Observations of endocrine-related effects in wildlife populations. Several sentinel species, such as birds and reptiles, are undergoing losses in fertility and population that some scientists suspect are related to EDCs.
- The identification of chemicals with endocrine disrupting properties, linked to disease outcomes, in laboratory studies. “Over the last 10 years, the focus of EDC research has shifted from investigating adult exposure and disease outcomes, to examining developmental exposure and later-life disease,” Birnbaum wrote.

### A call for action

Like the authors of the new report, Birnbaum calls for expanding understanding of the effects of EDCs on health with more interdisciplinary research. “To improve health, it is time for environmental health scientists and toxicologists to work more closely with colleagues in endocrinology, genetics, developmental biology, epigenetics, and clinical medicine, to bring EDC research into the mainstream of science,” she concluded.

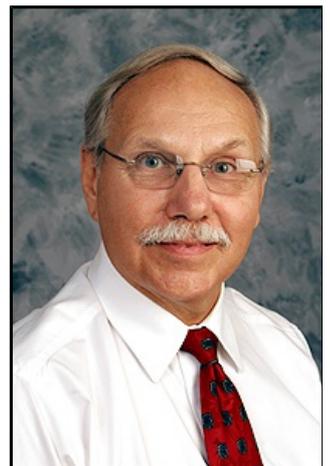
### Citations:

**Birnbaum LS.** (<http://ehp.niehs.nih.gov/1306695>) 2013. State of the science of endocrine disruptors. Environ Health Perspect 121(4):A514.

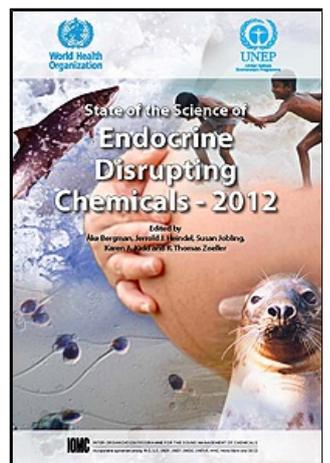
**WHO/UNEP** ([http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031\\_eng.pdf](http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031_eng.pdf)) 2013. The State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals- 2012 (Bergman Å, Heindel JJ, Jobling S, Kidd KA, Zoeller RT, eds). Geneva:United Nations Environment Program/World Health Organization. Available: [http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031\\_eng.pdf](http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031_eng.pdf) ([http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031\\_eng.pdf](http://unep.org/pdf/9789241505031_eng.pdf)) [accessed 18 March 2013].



*Birnbaum has taken a lead role in NIEHS initiatives in the area of endocrine disruption and health. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



*“It was a real honor to work with such a distinguished group of experts from around the world on this report on endocrine disrupting chemicals,” Heindel said. (Photo courtesy of Steve McCaw)*



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