



## NIEHS Spotlight

- [NIEHS Officially Welcomes New Director](#)
- [NIEHS Brings Experts and Leaders Together to Examine Childhood Obesity](#)
- [General Motors Selects NIEHS Grantee for Mott Award](#)
- [NIEHS Certified as 'Wildlife And Industry Together' Site](#)
- [Sister Study Video Wins Aurora Award](#)
- [Clarice Weinberg Receives Nathan Mantel Award](#)

## Science Notebook

- [NIEHS Director Launches Strategic Plan Initiative](#)
- [Full House: Forum on Endocrine Disrupters Draws Hundreds](#)
- [Rodent Models for NTP: What's Ahead?](#)
- [Expert Panel Reviews Amphetamines and Methylphenidate](#)
- [Harmful Chemicals May Reprogram Gene Response to Estrogen](#)
- [Day Care Facilities are Significant Source of Indoor Allergens, Study Shows](#)
- [DERT Papers of the Month – May 2005](#)



## After Hours

- [Fran Wagstaff: Solo Driver No More](#)



## Did You Know?

- [Asian Pacific Heritage Celebration](#)
- [Up and Coming](#)
- [Employee Benefits](#)



# NIEHS Spotlight

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## NIEHS Officially Welcomes New Director

*By Blondell Peterson*

A standing-room-only crowd filled the Rall Building auditorium June 24 to welcome the fourth NIEHS director, David Schwartz. The crowd overflowed into the lobby and cafeteria as well.

The event began with a slide presentation of Schwartz's life in science from his school days in the early 1970s when he wore an afro, which drew roars from the crowd, up to the present time with him pictured in front of the Rall Building. A caption on the final slide read: "NIEHS/NTP Director.



*NIH Director Elias Zerhouni swears in the new NIEHS director, David Schwartz*

NIH Director, Elias Zerhouni flew in from Bethesda to conduct the swearing-in ceremony. Deputy Director Sam Wilson introduced Zerhouni and noted that “we are beginning a new chapter in NIEHS history and we sincerely appreciate all of you coming to help us celebrate this event.”

Before the ceremony, Zerhouni cited many reasons NIEHS is “getting a star.”

“I think Schwartz is not just a smart and well respected researcher,” Zerhouni said. “The thing that comes across whenever you meet David is what came across in the tape – the humanity. You could tell he has that warmth, and also his unconventional nature. In fact, his unconventional nature is part of leadership – the ability to see not how to do things right, but to define what the right things are to do, not today, but ten years from now. I think Schwartz will show that. He has a passion for this mission, for the environmental health sciences.”

“Recruitment of the director for this institute [NIEHS] is one of the most important recruitments I have had to do during my tenure because I believe that the NTP's ability, for example, to bring together so many different agencies, and enlighten public policy, has rendered a great service to the nation and will continue to do so,” Zerhouni said.

He also acknowledged the leadership that NIEHS played in the NIH strategic plan for research in obesity, more specifically, the health environment aspect. He said that studying the role that the environment plays in chronic diseases is critical.

“In the nation we are seeing a rise in chronic diseases as opposed to acute diseases,” he said. “Thirty years ago acute conditions were the main worry. Today 75 percent of our health care expenditures are related to chronic conditions.”

Zerhouni continued to say he was pleased to celebrate the event and told the crowd that NIEHS is “very fortunate in many respects,” and he described the role the institute will have in the future.

“Not only do you support great environmental science, but also with the leadership that you have, I think we are going to see some refocusing toward children’s health and towards understanding that, at the end of the day, the reason we want to understand the environment is because we want to improve the lot of mankind,” Zerhouni said.

Zerhouni told the audience to “fasten your seatbelts.” He predicted that the next 25 years will usher in a new era with fundamental changes in the way we practice medicine.

“It is no longer just the technology that is going to drive change, but it’s the whole understanding of the symbiosis between us and our environment that will drive that change,” he said. “At the tip of that is NIEHS. So we’re looking to new leadership to protect us but also advance our knowledge.”

After being sworn in as NIEHS/NTP director, Schwartz took the stage and addressed the audience. He thanked his wife, mother-in-law and two daughters who were in attendance. He has a son, who was unable to attend the ceremony.

Schwartz said credit for NIEHS success goes to all NIEHS employees. In addition to that, he said, “It’s also important to recognize the substantial contribution of the innovative leadership provided by the three previous directors, and most recently, the team of Ken Olden and Sam Wilson. Ken and Sam are simply visionaries in environmental health sciences.”

Schwartz said he plans to build on the strong foundation and distinguished history the previous leadership achieved while crafting a vision and plan for the Institute. His vision includes all NIEHS employees. He created a strategic plan website and encourages all employees to provide feedback by answering six questions on the site. ([See related story](#))

“As I see it, there are four major areas that will have the greatest impact on preventing disease and improving human health: basic science, disease-oriented research, global environmental health, and of course, training tomorrow’s scientists,” he said.

To achieve these goals, Schwartz said, “We need to learn how to support and reward interdisciplinary teams of investigators.” Since NIEHS is not limited by an organ system, a disease or a population, Schwartz said the Institute has the opportunity to bring together teams of scientists with different backgrounds, skills, and ideas to more effectively tackle today’s critical problems in environmental health.

“This interdisciplinary approach will undoubtedly lead to more substantial advances in human health,” he said. “It will also align our Institute with some of the more progressive programs established by Zerhouni through the NIH Roadmap Initiative.”

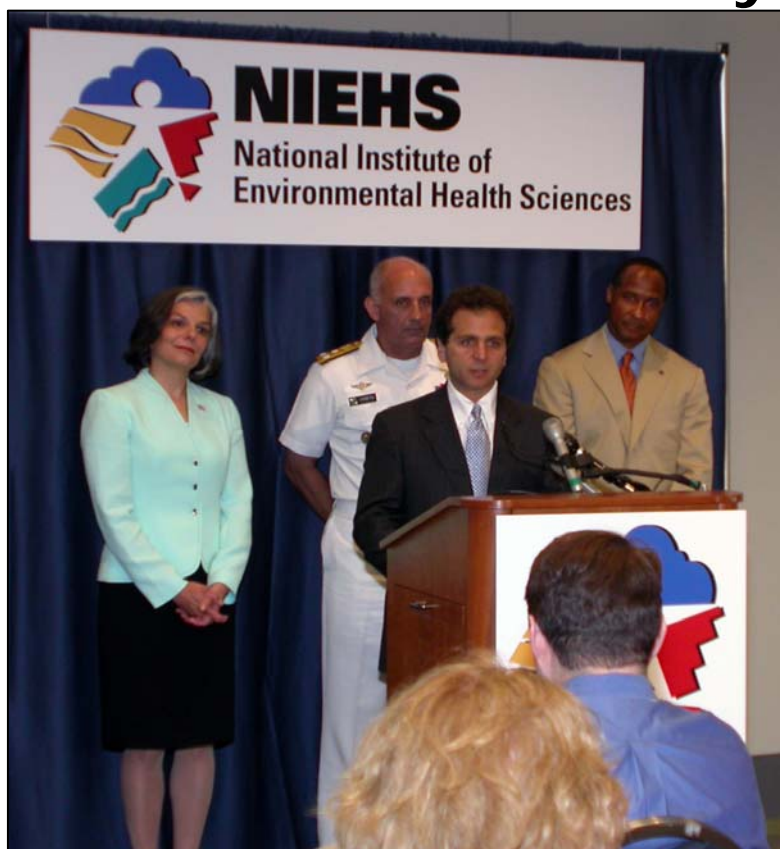
## NIEHS Brings Experts and Leaders Together to Examine Childhood Obesity

*By Jennifer M. Browne*

National and community leaders joined researchers to sort out how a child’s environment increases the risk for obesity and to identify ways the environment can be changed to address this health epidemic. More than 700 people gathered for the June 1-2 conference, “Environmental Solutions to Obesity in America’s Youth,” sponsored by NIEHS.

NIEHS Director David Schwartz opened the conference with a challenge to the attendees. “When we study how kids eat, where they get their food, and what opportunities they have to run and play, we realize that we have very high health expectations for them,” he stated. “But how can we expect kids to make the right choices if they live in communities where they can’t walk to

school, choose healthy foods, or play in a park because of distance, traffic, lack of availability, or crime?” he asked.



*From left: Julie Gerberding, director of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention; Richard Carmona, surgeon general; David Schwartz, NIEHS director; and Lynn Swann, chairman of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports. The four took questions from reporters at a press conference following the opening session of the NIEHS-sponsored childhood obesity conference.*

During his keynote remarks, HHS Secretary Mike Leavitt announced a new NIH childhood obesity prevention campaign “We Can! Ways to Enhance Children's Activity and Nutrition.” Focused on children ages 8 to 13, the secretary stated that the program will provide “resources and community-based programs for parents, caregivers, and youth that focus on encouraging healthy eating, increasing physical activity, and reducing sedentary time.”

U.S. Surgeon General Richard Carmona prefaced Leavitt’s remarks with his own personal and professional insights into childhood obesity. “We must teach our children to enjoy healthy foods and be physically active for at least 60 minutes a day,” he said. “Not only sports, but simple things like taking the stairs, riding their bikes, and just getting out and playing.”

Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Director Julie Gerberding and Lynn Swann, former professional football star and current chairman of the President’s Council on Physical Fitness and Sports, also addressed the challenges of childhood obesity.

NIEHS is working to determine how the environment affects obesity, and the conference highlighted environmental influences that led to the country’s current weight problems. It brought together people from a variety of disciplines to share environmental interventions for both prevention and treatment of obesity.



*A news conference was held after the opening session of the NIEHS-sponsored “Environmental Solutions to Obesity in America’s Youth,” which brought community leaders and public health experts together to discuss the problem.*

North Carolina's Division of Public Health showcased its *Eat Smart Move More...North Carolina*, a statewide initiative promoting increased opportunities for physical activity and healthy eating through policy and environmental change.

A Wednesday night reception featured the Fabulous Steppers, a stomp-dance and drumming group from Fort Belvoir, Va., and exercise activities by the Washington Metropolitan YMCA. Washington D.C. Youth Mayor Tyrell Holcomb spoke on the importance of reducing childhood obesity and tested new video game exercise programs from Sony and Powergrid Fitness.

Arkansas Governor Mike Huckabee, who lost 105 pounds and is now leading the Healthy Arkansas initiative, closed the conference. Referring to his place on the agenda, he joked, "When you're the last person at the end of a two-day conference, you know you are speaking to the true believers."

## **General Motors Selects NIEHS Grantee for Mott Award**

*By Blondell Peterson*

General Motors named NIEHS grantee Gerald N. Wogan, Ph.D., Massachusetts Institute of Technology, the 2005 Mott laureate at the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GM Cancer Research Awards.

Wogan was recognized for his studies related to Aflatoxin, a mold and food contaminant that acts with the hepatitis virus to cause liver cancer. The award included a gold medal and \$250,000. By 2005, GM gave more than \$51 million to cancer research.

"For more than 25 years, Wogan was instrumental in fostering the development of cutting edge research that led to the identification of some of the leading environmental risk factors for cancer," said Bill Suk, Division of Extramural Research and Training.

Suk said Wogan's role in identifying the mechanism by which Aflatoxin causes liver cancer likely saved numerous lives worldwide. Aflatoxin is often found on products like corn, peanuts and other crops in Africa and Asia.

In addition to teaching at MIT, Wogan served as head of the Department of Applied Biological Sciences, director of the Division of Toxicology and founding director of the Center for Environmental Health Sciences. He is also serving as a senior research fellow in the Laboratory of Human Carcinogenesis at the National Cancer Institute and visiting professor in the Department of Environmental Health Sciences of Johns Hopkins University.

"Dr. Wogan is that rare breed of scientist who not only conducts outstanding research and publishes excellent papers, but also finds the time to mentor up-and-coming scientists," said Suk. "He probably has fostered a love of science to more than 200 scientists who are now in leadership positions across the country as well as internationally."

In addition to the Mott Award, GM presented the Charles F. Kettering Award and the Alfred P. Sloan Jr. The prizes were named in honor of three distinguished former General Motors executives who were particularly interested in health sciences. The three award recipients were also guest speakers at the June 15 NIH Director's Wednesday Afternoon Lecture in the Masur Auditorium.

# NIEHS Certified as 'Wildlife And Industry Together' Site

*By Dick Sloane*

NIEHS is the first workplace in Research Triangle Park to achieve certification as a Wildlife And Industry Together, or WAIT, site.

The WAIT program is managed by the North Carolina Wildlife Federation, and is designed to recognize North Carolina workplaces that are practicing and promoting wildlife stewardship. It encourages the establishment of large portions of property for wildlife, but also addresses the need for environmental education for employees and the local community.

Some of the NIEHS programs highlighted during the certification process include:

- Extensive educational outreach efforts in the areas of wildlife and recycling. Educational websites providing information on the lake's flora and fauna, the bluebird houses, fishing regulations, site history, plans and ozone awareness are found in the NIEHS web site. (See the Environmental Awareness Advisory Committee page at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/eaac/home.htm>.) NIEHS reaches out to the internal and external community with bulletin boards, electronic newsletters, demonstrations at area schools, field trips, volunteer efforts with Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts, and active participation in Research Triangle Park environmental efforts like Electronics Recycling Day and promotional events for alternative modes of transportation.



*Walking trails, such as the self-guided nature trail around the lake NIEHS shares with EPA, are among the reasons for the NIEHS certification as a WAIT site.*



*The man-made lake is home to several species of fish, including largemouth and striped bass, blue gills, channel catfish and triploid carp.*

- The wooded 82-acre campus, with its mix of buildings, roadways, parking lots, lawns, and ornamental plantings left much of the natural mixed pine and hardwood forest. Some native plant species found on campus include dogwoods, oaks, elms, hickory, tulip poplar, beech, sweet gum, red maple, red bud, arrow-wood, highbush, ferns, spike rush, smartweed, and freshwater cordgrass. Wildflowers are planted in areas formerly mown, and 23 acres adjacent to the lake is considered emergent wetlands. The man-made lake is home to several fish species including largemouth and striped bass, blue gills, channel catfish, and triploid carp. The woods provide a home for many other species of wildlife, including beaver, rabbits, deer, and migratory birds such as herons, egrets and ducks.
- The Self-Guided Nature Trail that opened in February serves both NIEHS and EPA employees. A brochure available at the trail head near the NIEHS Memorial Garden gives detail on the flora, fauna, and history of the campus lake area. The trail's 15 marker posts are made of recycled plastic.
- The bluebird house program that's been in place for nearly 30 years. It provides about 50 houses, which are cleaned several times a year. Data is collected and compiled on the numbers and types of birds found in them.
- The Institute's annual Earth Day celebration that began in 1991. It serves as an influential employee continuing-education program featuring guest speakers, information tables, hands-on demonstrations, nature walks around the 23-acre campus lake, alternative transportation presentations, tree sale, plant exchanges, a vermicomposting demonstration, alternative fuel displays, and a photo contest.



“The NIEHS site epitomizes everything WAIT stands for: wildlife habitat projects, wildlife viewing and learning opportunities, community partnerships and a commitment to corporate wildlife stewardship,” said Tim Gestwicki, WAIT program coordinator, in a letter to Associate Director for Management Rich Freed.

NIEHS will be featured along with other member sites in statewide newspaper and magazine promotions, and WAIT literature and displays.

Earlier this year, NIEHS was granted status as an Environmental Partner in the North Carolina Environmental Stewardship Initiative, a program designed to improve overall environmental performance of organizations in the state.

## Sister Study Video Wins Aurora Award

The Sister Study Breast Cancer Research video won an Aurora Award for excellence in recruitment. Other category winners in the contest include Disney, Fox Sports NET, the Jewish United Fund of Chicago, Kentucky Educational Television, the Tampa Bay Advertising Federation, U.S. Marine Corps and Xavier University.

The Aurora Awards is an international competition designed to recognize excellence in the film and video industries. It specifically targets programs and commercials that would not normally have the opportunity to compete on a national level. It focuses on non-national commercials, regional or special interest entertainment and corporate sponsored film and video. Entries come from the U.S. and as far away as Hong Kong and Denmark.

## Clarice Weinberg Receives Nathan Mantel Award

Clarice R. Weinberg, NIEHS mathematical statistician, is the 2005 recipient of the Nathan Mantel Award for lifetime contributions to statistics in epidemiology.

The award is typically given every two years. The section on statistics in epidemiology of the American Statistical Association recognizes lifetime achievement in statistical methods developed to solve problems in epidemiology resulting from involvement in epidemiological analysis.

“A general research theme of mine has been the development of improved methods for design and analysis that account for sources of bias, missing data, response heterogeneity and mismeasurement in epidemiologic studies,” Weinberg said.



The award is named for the late Nathan Mantel, a renowned biostatistician who worked at NCI from 1947 until 1974. His groundbreaking work brought new tools to medical research, biostatistics and epidemiology. He developed the “Mantel-Haenszel Procedure” originally used to assess associations between an environmental exposure and cancer risk. His paper on this procedure was published in the *Journal of the National Cancer Institute* in 1959 and has since influenced the design and analysis of subsequent epidemiological studies. He also devised methods to measure the safety of varying doses of drugs, evaluate diagnostic tests and assess exposure to radiation.



# Science Notebook

## NIEHS Director Launches Strategic Plan Initiative

By Blondell Peterson

In launching his first broad initiative, David Schwartz encouraged all employees to go to the NIEHS Junction site and answer six questions that can help set priorities for environmental health initiatives at the Institute. Schwartz invited members of the public and all interested parties to provide feedback as well.

“As many of you are aware, we’re in the process of developing a strategic plan for our Institute,” Schwartz said during his first formal address to NIEHS after being sworn in June 24 at the Rall Building. ([See related story](#)) “We want to develop a plan that breaks down divisional barriers and better integrates scientific disciplines,” he said.

Schwartz said the “transparent, inclusive and candid” initiative will be conducted in the open, and will be responsive to the present and future needs of the environmental science field.

**NIEHS**  
National Institute of  
Environmental Health Sciences

### Strategic Plan 2006

**NIEHS EMPLOYEES...**

**YOU ARE INVITED TO HELP US PLAN FOR THE FUTURE!**

NIEHS wants input from scientists, and interested members of the public, to help set priorities for environmental health research and training. You can help identify barriers to progress and define new directions for environmental health.

NIEHS also is accepting nominations for persons qualified to participate in a workshop to discuss details of the Strategic Plan. For more information, email [niehs-plan2006@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:niehs-plan2006@niehs.nih.gov).

Submit your comments on six questions critical to the 2006 NIEHS Strategic Plan by visiting [www.niehs.nih.gov/external/plan2006/home.htm](http://www.niehs.nih.gov/external/plan2006/home.htm). Questions about the Strategic Plan can be sent to [niehs-plan2006@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:niehs-plan2006@niehs.nih.gov) or faxed to 919-541-1994.

U.S. Department of Health and Human Services  
National Institute of Health  
National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences

To that end, a notice was posted in the Federal Register and a web site was established to get input from scientists, the general public and all interested parties. The web page feedback form consists of six questions, and can be found at <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/external/plan2006/home.htm>.

The questions are:

1. What are the disease processes and public health concerns that are relevant to environmental health sciences?
2. How can environmental health sciences be used to understand how biological systems work, why some individuals are more susceptible to disease, or why individuals with the same disease may have very different clinical outcomes?
3. What are the major opportunities and challenges in global environmental health?
4. What are the environmental exposures that need further consideration?
5. What are the critical needs for training the next generation of scientists in environmental health?
6. What technology or infrastructural changes are needed to fundamentally advance environmental health science?

According to Schwartz, the strategic plan will take advantage of the evolving nature of science and the opportunities it brings, including the use of non-mammalian models such as fruit flies and budding yeast and developing high-throughput bioassays to more rapidly and efficiently screen environmental exposures.

“In October, we’ll host a large strategic planning meeting here at NIEHS, and I hope to have a draft of our strategic plan for you to review in the fall,” Schwartz said.

## **Full House: Forum on Endocrine Disrupters Draws Hundreds**

Media coverage and general attendance exceeded expectations at the Endocrine Society’s pre-meeting forum on endocrine-disrupting chemicals. Jerry Heindel, NIEHS scientific program administrator in the Division of Extramural Research and Training, orchestrated the day-long forum at the San Diego Convention Center.

NIEHS co-sponsored the forum and received recognition for both financial and scientific support. Heindel, along with Ken Korach, program director of the NIEHS Environmental Disease & Medicine Program and former editor-in-chief of *Endocrinology*, organized the forum to highlight the issues surrounding endocrine disruptors.

Fifty to 75 people were expected to attend, but more than 200 people, including members of the media, registered for the June 3 event. Elizabeth Weiss, from *USA Today*, interviewed Korach.

Korach, Heindel and NIEHS biologist Retha Newbold represented NIEHS at the forum. Newbold also presented her research at the Endocrine Society annual meeting June 4-6. Her research focused on Genistein, a soy phytoestrogen found in soy-based infant formulas. Results showed marked altered reproduction function in mice given Genistein at doses equivalent to human infant exposure from soy formula.

Endocrine Society leaders committed to giving higher visibility to the research area of endocrine disruptors and indicated it would be discussed in future annual meetings. “Overall, it was a very positive activity and all the participants were very pleased,” Korach said.

# Rodent Models for NTP: What's Ahead?

As part of a series of activities to evaluate the NTP bioassay program, a panel of international experts gathered at NIEHS June 16-17 to discuss possible changes.

Angela King-Herbert from the Laboratory of Experimental Pathology coordinated the workshop entitled, "Animal Models for the NTP Rodent Cancer Bioassay: Strains & Stocks – Should We Switch?"

Invited experts included U.S. and international scientists representing industry, academia and government. They convened in the Rall Building to discuss current strains used in cancer bioassays and the feasibility of their continued use. The panel also discussed the multiple strain approach in the cancer bioassay.

Strengths and weaknesses of both current rodent models and proposed models were discussed. General factors in selecting new models included isogenic versus outbred, sensitivity to carcinogens, spontaneous tumor/disease rate, weight and lifespan. The feasibility of using multiple strains was discussed extensively.

The first day of the workshop consisted on informational presentations followed by discussions and questions. Breakout groups gathered for in-depth discussions, and formulated responses to specific questions, and presented their responses on the second day. The breakout groups concluded that using the multiple-strain approach might be beneficial; however, consideration should be given to cost and consistency of results, which can vary by strain.

John Bucher, deputy director of the Environmental Toxicology Program and head of the Toxicology Operations Branch, said in concluding remarks that NTP will consider the recommendations. NTP scientists may contact workshop participants at a later date with additional questions, he said.

"We have at least two different scheduled presentations of the outcome of this workshop. The deliberations here will be summarized at the Toxicology Forum in Aspen in July and discussed with the NTP Board of Scientific Counselors at its meeting August 18," Bucher said.

The meeting agenda and slide presentations can be viewed on the NTP website at <http://ntp-server.niehs.nih.gov/index.cfm?objectid=0ED58D6F-F1F6-975E-78363B0DA7B22A54>.

## Expert Panel Reviews Amphetamines and Methylphenidate

*By Mike Shelby and Gloria Jahnke*

Sponsored by the National Toxicology Program Center for the Evaluation of Risks to Human Reproduction, an expert panel convened Jan. 10-12 in Alexandria, Va., to evaluate scientific evidence on the potential reproductive and/or developmental toxicity associated with exposure to the central nervous system stimulants amphetamines and methylphenidate.

The CERHR chose these stimulants because of widespread use in children, availability of developmental studies in children and experimental animals, and public concern about the effects of these stimulants on child development.

The panel reached the following conclusions based on its evaluation of the data on amphetamines and methamphetamine:

## **Amphetamine**

There is some concern with potential neurobehavioral alterations due to prenatal amphetamine exposure in humans both in therapeutic and non-therapeutic settings.

## **Methamphetamine**

There is concern about potential adverse perinatal outcomes and neurobehavioral alterations due to prenatal methamphetamine exposure in humans both in therapeutic and non-therapeutic settings.

The panel reached the following conclusions after evaluating data on methylphenidate:

There is minimal concern for methylphenidate-induced growth restriction in humans at standard therapeutic doses.

There is negligible concern for methylphenidate-induced tics and movement disorders in humans at standard therapeutic doses.

The final reports from all the evaluations are posted on the CERHR web site at <http://cerhr.niehs.nih.gov> and are available in print from the CERHR. A list of suggested critical data needs is located at the end of chapter five. These are additional experiments suggested by the panel. For more information, contact Michael Shelby, CERHR director at 919-541-3455 or [Shelby@niehs.nih.gov](mailto:Shelby@niehs.nih.gov).

# **Harmful Chemicals May Reprogram Gene Response to Estrogen**

New research indicates that an environmental agent –specifically DES, or diethylstilbestrol, which was prescribed for women from 1938 until 1971 to prevent miscarriages – can actually change or reprogram some genes so they function differently.

NIEHS funded the two-year study conducted by researchers at the University of Texas M.D. Anderson Cancer Center. The results were published in May in the *Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences*.

The study showed that exposure to harmful chemicals and drugs during critical developmental periods early in life may actually reprogram the way specific genes respond to estrogen, which could determine whether people with a genetic predisposition for a disease actually develop it.

Rats with a genetic defect that predisposed them to uterine tumors were used in the study. Nearly 100 percent of the rats exposed to DES during an early developmental stage developed uterine tumors, compared to slightly more than half of those with the genetic predisposition alone.

# **Day Care Facilities are Significant Source of Indoor Allergens, Study Shows**

NIEHS researchers who analyzed data collected from 89 home day cares and child care centers in two North Carolina counties found detectable levels of allergens, including fungus, cats, cockroaches, dogs, dust mites, and mice. The levels mirrored the levels found in Southern homes.

The highest concentrations of allergens tended to be from cats, dogs and fungus in the day care settings as well as in Southern homes.

Sam Arbes, clinical research coordinator and lead author on the study, noted that, as shown in previous studies, dog and cat allergens were found in nearly all facilities, including those where no dog or cat was observed.

The three-prong data collection approach used in the study measured allergen levels in each facility; used a questionnaire to collect information from managers; and lastly, researchers determined which rooms the children spent most of their time and collected dust samples from those rooms. The study also found significant differences between carpeted and non-carpeted areas. The non-carpeted areas had lower concentrations of five of the allergens than did carpeted areas.

## DETR Papers of the Month – May 2005

By Jerry Phelps

- 1) Timms BG, Howdeshell KL, Barton L, Bradley S, Richter CA, Vom Saal FS. Estrogenic chemicals in plastic and oral contraceptives disrupt development of the fetal mouse prostate and urethra. *Proc Natl Acad Sci U S A*. 2005 May 10;102(19):7014-9.  
**Implications:** Since both bisphenol A and ethinylestradiol are known to cross the placenta and enter the fetus, these results may have direct implications on human health. The dose of ethinylestradiol used in the experiment was actually lower than that of women taking oral contraception. The bisphenol A dose used produced fetal levels lower than those seen in human fetuses at birth. Therefore, this experiment is highly relevant to everyday human exposures. The study authors conclude that these effects “warrant a thorough reevaluation of risks posed by doses of both ethinylestradiol and bisphenol A below those to which human fetuses are exposed.”  
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/dert/profiles/hilites/2005/plastic.htm>
- 2) Que LG, Liu L, Yan Y, Whitehead GS, Gavett SH, Schwartz DA, Stamler JS. Protection from experimental asthma by an endogenous bronchodilator. *Science*. 2005 Jun 10;308(5728):1618-21. Epub 2005 May 26.  
**Implications:** This study shows that GSNO reductase is very important in the regulation of the size of the airway under normal conditions and in response to allergen challenge. Furthermore, a deficiency of SNOs may make fundamental contributions to the development of asthma. Team leader Jonathan Stamler reports that the findings "suggest that the SNO deficit seen in patients with asthma may result from increased GSNO reductase activity" and that "the enzyme may therefore offer a novel target for therapies designed to alleviate airway obstruction." In addition, GSNO repletion in patients may treat asthmatic symptoms.  
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/dert/profiles/hilites/2005/dilator.htm>
- 3) Munoz-de-Toro M, Markey C, Wadia PR, Luque EH, Rubin BS, Sonnenschein C, Soto AM. Perinatal exposure to Bisphenol A alters peripubertal mammary gland development in mice. *Endocrinology*. 2005 May 26; [Epub ahead of print]  
**Implications:** The bisphenol A-induced increases in terminal end bud density at puberty as well as the increased numbers of ducts reported previously by this laboratory in adult animals are most troubling, since these two structures are the sites where cancer arises in humans and rodents. These findings suggest that bisphenol A exposure in humans may be an important risk factor for breast cancer and should be studied more intensely.  
<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/dert/profiles/hilites/2005/mamgland.htm>

- 4) Members of the Toxicogenomics Research Consortium. Standardizing global gene expression analysis between laboratories and across platforms. Nat Methods. 2005 May;2(5):351-6.

**Implications:** The results from these studies indicate that microarray experiments can be comparable across multiple laboratories, especially when a common platform and set of procedures are used. These advances in microarray technology demonstrate to the scientific community how to obtain more consistent and reliable results. Standardizing microarray techniques can accelerate the pace of scientific discovery about biological responses to environmental stressors. Ultimately this could improve our ability to detect very early indicators of diseases like cancer to identify people at risk for environmentally related diseases.

<http://www.niehs.nih.gov/dert/profiles/hilites/2005/array.htm>



# After Hours

## Fran Wagstaff: Solo Driver No More

*By Colleen Chandler*

Fran Wagstaff, an administrative specialist in the Office of the Scientific Director, is quoted on a Research Triangle Park web site, enthusiastically touting the benefits of vanpooling.



*Wagstaff, on the far right, with members of the vanpool that starts and ends in Greensboro each day.*



Wagstaff lives in the Burlington/Graham area, and drove to NIEHS for nearly 15 years. During that time, she drove more than 375,000 miles, went through five full sets of tires, two windshields and literally wore out three cars. Four times she had tires blow out on the Interstate at 65 miles per hour, and at last count, was spending upwards of \$50 per week on gas.

But that was then.

After contacting Dick Sloane, the NIEHS resource recovery specialist and Transhare program coordinator, Wagstaff discovered a Triangle Transit Authority vanpool already existed that would pick her up 5 miles from her house and deposit her in Research Triangle Park. From the RTP bus terminal, she could catch a TTA shuttle to NIEHS.

“I despise riding on the interstate – at least as far as driving,” she said. “But now I don’t have to drive.” With the NIEHS subsidy, Wagstaff’s ride to work is free.

Sloane said she was so excited about the vanpool once she joined that he asked her to draft something for the TTA web site, which she did. Although it is his job to promote alternative modes of transportation for NIEHS employees, Sloane couldn’t have said it better himself.

Her testimonial can be found at: <http://www.smartcommute.org/Vanpool.htm>.

“I’ve begun to use the commute time to read a good book, something I hadn’t done in years. And, yes, I’ve taken a few naps along with way,” Wagstaff said on the TTA web site. “And while I’m meeting new people, reading a good book or taking a nap, our van pool as a whole eliminates 15 cars in the morning commute, cutting the traffic issues during rush hour and saving on the use of fuel in general.”

Wagstaff says it takes her about 1 ½ hours to get to work each way, about twice the time it took when she drove herself. But she says it is well worth it. Number one on her list of reasons to vanpool – even higher than saving the cost of gas, car maintenance, repairs and insurance – is the fact that riding in a vanpool takes the stress out of the long commute.

Nearby, in Raleigh, city officials are looking at TTA and its RTP activities designed to get people involved in vanpooling, riding the bus or biking to work. The *Raleigh News & Observer* reported that 2,500 RTP workers took part in last year’s Smart Commute Challenge, pledging to try another way to get to work.

Sloane said the NIEHS Transhare Program, which subsidizes and in many cases pays the entire cost of vanpooling or riding the bus, is a good deal for riders and the Institute, because:

- Vanpooling and riding the bus save employees money, reduce auto emissions, and the stress-free ride to work improves the quality of their lives. Instead of exerting all that energy fighting with traffic, riders can sleep, read, chat with other riders, daydream, or just enjoy the beautiful North Carolina scenery. (Just ask Fran.)
- It’s a good deal for NIEHS because it means fewer cars in the crowded parking lots, it improves employee moral and even provides a little more physical activity for them. It gives the Institute a great image as a supporter of alternative modes of transportation and shows NIEHS is an advocate for air quality.

The NIEHS program started in 2000, but really didn’t swing into action until April 2001, when Sloane filled the newly created coordinator slot. He said he expects another 10-15 percent increase in the number of people participating in the subsidy program by the end of next year. Unless, that is, the cost of gas continues to rise. Money Central, on msn.com, lists Raleigh-Durham as the ninth most expensive place to in the U.S. to drive to work.

NIEHS currently subsidizes the cost of 12 people on vanpools and 53 bus riders. Also part of the Transhare Program, 61 people telecommute, 34 carpool, 21 cycle to work, and 3 ride motorcycles, Sloane said. For people considering trying one of the alternative methods to get to work, Wagstaff offers this advice: “Give it a try for a month or two. You can always go back to driving.”

Biologist Sandy Ward telecommutes, working from home two days a week. She estimates that cuts 5,200 miles a year from her commute and saves her more than \$400.

For more information on the NIEHS Transhare Program, go to <http://www.niehs.nih.gov/omfeb/transhare.htm>.



# Did You Know?

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## Asian Pacific Heritage Celebration



*Guest speaker, Samia Serageldin speaks on the roles of Islamic women especially in Asia. Thirty percent of Asia's population is Muslim, making it the second largest religion in the world.*

NIEHS celebrated Asian Pacific Heritage June 1 at the Rall Building with a variety of activities, beginning with guest speaker Samia Serageldin, author of "The Cairo House."

Serageldin's presentation, "Beyond a Monolithic View of Islam: Cultural and Other Diversities across the Muslim World," described the roles of Islamic women, especially in Asia.



*Following the speech, Asian food samplings were offered in the cafeteria while members of the North Carolina Chinese Traditional Music Ensemble performed on traditional instruments.*





*The entertainment concluded with Badma Rao's dance company members treating the audience to traditional Indian Bharatanatyam dance routines.*



# Up and Coming

- Learn more about Zimbabwe **July 13** at a presentation sponsored by the Office of Equal Employment Opportunity. The presentation, “Zimbabwe: The House Munhumutapa Built” will be hosted by Michael Madziva from the Laboratory of Signal Transduction. It is at 11 a.m. in the Rodbell Conference Center, room 101C.
- The NIEHS Work Life Center career counselor will be available to meet with interested employees on **July 12 and 16**. To schedule a confidential session, call the NIH Work Life Center at (301) 435-1619.
- The NIH ombudsman, Kevin Jessar, will be at NIEHS for consultations on work-related issues **July 13 and 14**. Jessar is a resource for employees at all levels and functions independently of management structure. To schedule a confidential session, call Jessar at (301) 594-9550. For more information, go to <http://www4.od.nih.gov/ccr/>.
- Learn about the new electronic personnel folders by attending an employee information session on **Aug. 3** in Rodbell Conference Center, rooms 101 B and C. Two information sessions are scheduled: 10-11:30 a.m. and 1-2:30 p.m. The new electronic folder filing system enables personnel action documents (SF-50s) to flow automatically into each employee’s electronic folder from the personnel system. These documents will no longer be printed and manually distributed, but employees will be notified via e-mail when new ones are generated. The new system is expected to improve accuracy of employee folders since the scanning process identified a number of misfiled documents. For those unable to attend or for more information, got the eOPF web site at: <http://hr.od.nih.gov/eOPF/default.htm> or <http://intranet.hhs.gov/eopf/>.

# Employee Benefits

Information on the following topics can be found by at <http://hr.od.nih.gov/Benefits/newsletters/current.htm#info>:

- Benefits Calendar of Events
- Who Is My Benefits Contact?
- Elimination Of The Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Open Season
- Thrift Savings Plan (TSP) Benefits For Military Members Returning To Civilian Service
- Flexible Spending Accounts – New Grace Period Implemented
- What Happens To My Child’s Health And Life Insurance Coverage When He/She Turns Age 22?
- What Are Voluntary Contributions Under The Civil Service Retirement System (CSRS)?
- How Is Sick Leave Credited Towards My Retirement?



The *e-Factor*, which is produced by the Office of Communications and Public Liaison, is the staff newsletter at the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences. It is published as a communication service to NIEHS employees. We welcome your comments and suggestions. The content is not copyrighted. It can be downloaded and reprinted without permission. If you are an editor who wishes to use our material in your publication, we ask that you send us a copy for our records.

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