



# SF Bay Area PSR news

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

THE ACTIVE CONSCIENCE OF AMERICAN MEDICINE

## Environmental Health Program Report

**S**F Bay Area PSR is among the leading organizations providing scientifically credible advocacy on environmental health issues in Northern California. Many of our chapter members are regarded as experts on environmental health, and are regularly called upon to speak at press conferences, Grand Rounds, symposia, and to policymakers. Seven years ago SF Bay Area PSR began to build an environmental health program with a broad membership of physicians and other health care professionals committed to environmental health education and activism. We have developed a number of environmental health projects in partnership with community-based organizations and individual clinicians throughout the region to promote clean air, clean water, elimination of environmental toxicants, safe schools, healthy food, and environmental justice in our communities. SF Bay Area PSR's scientific expertise and credibility serve our communities by cultivating an understanding of newly emerging environmental health issues and through advocacy on behalf of our collective public health.

We have excelled in several programmatic areas over the years, including our work on practitioner training in pediatric environmental health, the reduction of PVC-use in hospitals and the promotion of product alternatives, the support of legislation and policy to protect the community's public and environmental health, and our greening the NICU (neonatal intensive care) project. Our environmental health programmatic work expanded a great deal in 2007 to include new work with Health Care Without Harm on climate change and its health effects, the organization of the Global Health and Safety Initiative (GHSI), the growth of our Healthier Foods in Hospitals campaign, and, in collaboration with UCSF, development of

the new Reproductive Environmental Health Toolkit.

In addition to the technical assistance and organizing support that our staff provides at Bay Area health care facilities, our speakers' bureau delivers environmental health presentations to health care professionals where they work. These presentations not only serve the practitioners that attend the talks, but the information is also taken back and applied in clinical practice to communicate important environmental health education to patients and their families. Often, these professionals go beyond education about particular issues into advocacy and activism at the facilities where they work. We estimate that in 2007, SF Bay Area PSR provided environmental health and advocacy education to over 3,000 people in our communities.

### **Pediatric Environmental Health Toolkit**

Our work on the development and distribution of the Pediatric Environmental Health Toolkit, endorsed by the American Academy of Pediatrics last year, continues to thrive. A clinical tool designed to guide to both providers and patients on preventing exposures to toxic chemicals (such as lead, mercury, pesticides) and other substances that may adversely affect child health, it identifies critical developmental stages and opportunities for age-appropriate intervention during well-child visits. Over five years, more than 1,000 practitioners in Bay Area communities have received Toolkits, participated in trainings and heard presentations about environmental toxicants that affect pediatric health and development and how best to communicate information about these toxicants in their everyday practices.

## **SF Bay Area PSR Tax Rebate Donation Protest!**

**Taxpayers in the Bay Area have spent \$18 billion on the Iraq War.\***

Are you tired of knowing your hard-earned dollars are being spent wastefully and dangerously? Have you ever thought it would be great if you had more direct control over how your tax dollars are being spent? Here's Your Chance.

Consider donating your rebate, or a portion of your rebate, to SF Bay Area PSR. We will use these funds to:

- ✓ Continue working towards an end to the Iraq War and encouraging diplomatic engagement over war with Iran through speaking events, articles, media, and policy advocacy work with State and National Medical Associations and our legislators.
- ✓ Sustain a strong, health-professional voice against efforts to spend yet more of our tax dollars on producing new nuclear weapons, thereby upending the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and placing all humanity at grave risk.

**We will be sending out a special letter and return envelope in a few weeks to encourage participation in this protest, but feel free to get on board now!**

\* National Priorities Project Database ([www.nationalpriorities.org](http://www.nationalpriorities.org))

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## Environmental Health...

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SF Bay Area PSR is particularly committed to working with providers serving communities disproportionately impacted by environmental toxicants, and has targeted our Northern California work on providers serving these communities, including Richmond, Antioch, Salinas, Berkeley, Oakland, and San Francisco. We will continue to focus on strengthening relationships with these practitioners and support them as they convey the importance of these issues to their peers in practice and their local communities. They have the potential to become some of our strongest advocates on environmental health issues. SF Bay Area PSR will also explore collaborative relationships with National PSR, California Department of Public Health, community-based clinics, public health departments, and local and regional medical associations and medical schools to create a larger distribution network for Toolkit materials.

### Reproductive Environmental Health Toolkit

There is increasing scientific evidence of the impact environmental contaminants can have on early development, and planning is under way for the development of another important clinical resource, the Reproductive Environmental Health Toolkit, which will be designed to provide information about preventing exposures to toxic chemicals and other substances that may adversely affect the ability to get pregnant, maintain a healthy pregnancy, avoid poor birth outcomes, and subsequent child health.

Education and prevention of prenatal exposures are key elements of a larger strategy to reduce the impacts of environmental contaminants before the time of conception. It is this issue that we plan to address. Our goal

is to prevent exposures via education of health professionals--conduits for educating women and their families--and to engage health professionals to advocate for changes that result in reduced harmful exposures.

A Reproductive Environmental Health Toolkit, coupled with training and outreach programs to reach a diverse audience of providers, will address this critical need in reproductive health care. SF Bay Area PSR will play a key role in the development of this exciting new resource, in collaboration with UCSF's Program in Reproductive Health and the Environment and Ob/Gyn Department, the American College of Ob/Gyn, the American College of Nurse Midwives, and the Collaborative on Health and the Environment. Several of SF Bay Area PSR's most active members and experienced staff in our environmental health program are on board to serve as advisors and content experts.

### SF Bay Area PSR Climate Change Working Group

This program, founded in August 2007, represents the latest addition to our environmental health and sustainability programs. It serves to educate the health care industry and the public about global climate change, develop strategies for reducing the health care industry's greenhouse gas footprint, and explores ways to anticipate and adapt to the impact of global warming in the Bay Area. Through these efforts, SF Bay Area PSR is building advocacy for climate change action in the health care sector.

In January 2008, SF Bay Area PSR Steering Committee members participated in a Focus the Nation event held at UCSF. This event informed health care workers and the public about the impact of climate change, and encouraged participants to explore mitigation

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The San Francisco Bay Area Chapter of PSR is a non-profit educational organization committed to the elimination of nuclear and other weapons of mass destruction, the achievement of a sustainable environment, and the reduction of violence and its causes.

#### Steering Committee

##### PRESIDENT

Robert M. Gould, MD

##### VICE PRESIDENT

Gina M. Solomon, MD, MPH

##### SECRETARY/TREASURER

Pearl Leonard, LCSW

##### MEMBERS AT LARGE

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Michael D. Geschwind, MD, PhD

Sarah Janssen, MD, PhD, MPH

Thomas L. Hall, MD, DrPH

Brian Linde, MD, MPH

Frank Lucido, MD

Thomas B. Newman, MD, MPH

Jeffrey Ritterman, MD

##### STUDENT REPRESENTATIVES

*Stanford:* Jack Wang

*UCSF:* Elizabeth Harrington, Ashkon Shaahinfar, and Robin Tittle.

#### Staff

##### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Evan Krasner, MD

##### PROGRAM COORDINATOR

Lucia Sayre

##### PROGRAM ASSOCIATE

Lena Brook, MES

##### DESIGN AND LAYOUT

Yvonne Day, Y•Day Designs

For additional information or to suggest materials for inclusion in the *SF Bay Area PSR News*, address correspondence to:

San Francisco Bay Area PSR

2288 Fulton St., Suite 307

Berkeley, CA 94704

510-845-8395 • fax: 510-845-8476

action@sfbaypsr.org • www.sfbaypsr.org

## In Memory

All of us at SF Bay Area PSR mourn the loss of Dr. Alvin Leonard, a longtime supporter, and husband of Steering Committee member Pearl Leonard. We will have more information about Dr. Leonard and his major contributions to public health, and opportunities to honor him in our next newsletter.



# Sacramento PSR news

By Harry Wang, MD  
President, PSR/Sacramento

On March 27, President Bush stated that “normalcy is returning back to Iraq.” Our chapter offers an annual scholarship essay contest to encourage youth to question misstatements like this and to give thought to important issues of our day.

This year’s quote is by Marine Corps Medal of Honor winner Major General Smedley Butler: “War is a racket...in which the profits are reckoned in dollars and the losses in lives.” 114 essays based on these words were submitted by high school seniors in Sacramento and surrounding counties. A panel of judges selected the top three essays after hearing the ten finalists at a May 4

dinner event at California State University, Sacramento. Scholarship awards totaled \$10,250.

On March 18, Jimmy Spearow, PhD, and Harry Wang, MD, joined Robert Gould, MD, in giving testimony in Tracy for the Draft Complex Transformation Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement. We spoke out against government plans to build new nuclear weapons and refurbish the U.S. nuclear weapons complex.

Other activities have included the following:

- Co-sponsoring a book talk and signing with Alice Rothchild, MD, author of *Broken Promises, Broken Dreams* (12/3/07)

- Sponsoring a talk on health care access issues for low-income workers by Priscilla Abbott, Coalition of Concerned Medical Professionals (1/9/08)
- Sponsoring “Sex Trafficking in the U.S.” presentation by Aashika Damodar (3/12/08)
- Co-sponsoring the Energy and Security Community Forum (4/6/08)
- Co-sponsoring “The 2008 Elections: Can America’s Highest Values Make a Comeback?” presentation by Rabbi Michael Lerner (4/27/08)

For more information about chapter activities, please visit [www.sacpsr.org](http://www.sacpsr.org) or call 916 955-6333. ■

## Environmental Health...

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strategies for UCSF and at home. Gina Solomon outlined the climate change impact projected for California and presented potential adaptation strategies, Tom Newman discussed UCSF’s sustainability efforts, and Bob Gould spoke on the public health risks of promoting nuclear power as a climate change solution.

Climate Change Working Group members engage in a growing range of education efforts. Tom Hall and Gina Solomon organized a UCSF public health course that prepares medical students to manage the predicted local impact of climate change, including increased illness and mortality related to rising temperatures. Peter Joseph and Vanessa Johnson have enhanced public outreach on climate change through presentations to schools and local communities. SF Bay Area PSR is planning more education and advocacy events for health care facilities and

the public, and gathering expertise in the numerous, interconnected aspects of climate change including the scientific considerations, impact and adaptation strategies, methods of reducing greenhouse gas footprints, effects on agriculture, and issues surrounding the idea of nuclear power as a climate change mitigation strategy.

In April 2008 we completed a document entitled “Addressing Climate Change in the Health Care Setting: Opportunities for Action.” SF Bay Area PSR developed this report in collaboration with representatives from Health Care Without Harm and Practice Greenhealth. The document encourages health care facilities to reduce their greenhouse gas footprints and guides them through the initial stages of formulating a sustained climate change action program. It provides an introduction and overview of the issues, with a focus on the critical role of health care in climate change mitigation, and includes practical guidance for hospitals to get started.

The document will be provided to participants

at the 2008 CleanMed conference in Pittsburgh. SF Bay Area PSR will also present a poster on hospital climate change mitigation at the event. Information about hospital climate change mitigation gathered through this process will be compiled into a presentation for Working Group members to deliver in support of their other education and advocacy building efforts.

### Sustainable Food in Health Care

This project seeks to catalyze change in the California agricultural sector by leveraging the purchasing power of the region’s health care industry. As places of healing, hospitals have a natural incentive to provide food that is beneficial for people and the environment in which we live. Hospitals and health care institutions can help to change the state of America’s agricultural sector and improve health outcomes for their patients, by supporting a market-based transition to a more environmentally responsible food

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## Environmental Health...

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system. Through their purchasing practices, health care institutions can help reduce air and water pollution, support farm worker health and safety, encourage more sustainable farming practices, promote nutrition and connection between healthy food and healthy people, reduce antibiotic resistance, and support local economies.

On March 5, 2008, a variety of hospital staff, including food service managers, dieticians, and social workers, came together for our Sustainable Food in Hospitals event, an exciting roundtable discussion at Presentation Park in downtown Oakland, featuring presentations by the Bay Area Hospital Leadership Team and renowned author Susan Allport.

The Hospital Leadership Team, developed and coordinated by SF Bay Area PSR staff, is comprised of seven members from a range of public and private health care facilities, and celebrated its first anniversary earlier this year. During the event, they shared their experiences in implementing a range of sustainable food programs at their hospitals. Providing a wealth of examples and inspiring visuals, they discussed changes made to patient trays and in cafeteria selections such as replacing canned and frozen vegetables with locally-sourced seasonal produce, providing dairy products made without bovine growth hormone, increased from-scratch cooking and much more. The presentations were particularly inspirational to participants who are new to this work, and we hope that many of them will become leaders for change at their respective facilities.

Susan Allport is author of *The Queen of Fats: Why Omega-3s Were Removed from the Western Diet and What We Can Do to Replace Them*, a hot topic in the nutrition and

medical communities, and one that strongly resonates with SF Bay Area PSR's efforts to bring healthier food to hospitals through our Healthy Food in Health Care program.

Allport gave a compelling presentation focused on the importance of maintaining a proper balance between omega-3 and omega-6 fatty acids in our diets. This was the first time that SF Bay Area PSR staff brought a technical scientific presentation to one of our food roundtable events, and we received excellent feedback about the day.

### The Global Health and Safety Initiative

SF Bay Area PSR was approached in the summer of 2007 to help coordinate the launch meeting of a social movement in the health care industry. The Global Health and Safety Initiative (GHSI) brings together hospitals, health care organizations, NGOs, architectural and engineering firms, industry, governmental organizations and academia to improve patient safety, worker/workplace safety, and environmental health in health care. The initial meeting took place in Oakland in October of 2007, and 22 major health systems from around the country were represented by senior managers. 18 of these health systems have now signed on as co-founders of the Initiative, including Kaiser, Catholic Healthcare West, UCSF, and St. Josephs Health. SF Bay Area PSR's environmental health program continues to play a major role in the Initiative through the organization of 5 workgroups and the Advisory Council. The goals and objectives of the Initiative include: 1) sharing of information and best practices that improve environmental health and safety within facility operations, 2) an environmentally preferable purchasing resource with listings of a broad range of product categories, 3) an eco-footprint calculator tool that helps institutions measure their overall carbon, water, waste and toxics footprint, and 4) a research collaborative which will sponsor

and facilitate research to demonstrate improvements and new technologies that accelerate the creation of high performance healing environments. SF Bay Area PSR will continue to work with the planning team of the Initiative to organize the workgroups, develop budgets and work plans and recruit more health care systems and the larger clinical community.

### Looking Forward

We are proud of the considerable list of activities and accomplishments of our small but dedicated non-profit organization, and much of this work would not be possible without the dedication and commitment to volunteer efforts by our members. We hear time and again about the importance and influence of the voice from the medical community that SF PSR provides. There is potential for so much more. With the arrival of our new Executive Director, Evan Krasner MD, our organization intends to build an internal structure that can support expansion of both our environmental health and security programs and expand our fundraising capability. We will work to attract new members, strengthen our collaboration with National PSR, and activate our current members to participate in the program work and to continue their generous financial support. It is an exciting time for our organization and a critical time for us to expand our environmental health work. We appreciate your support of our endeavors and encourage our members to join with us in moving forward. ■

*Lucia Sayre-Program Coordinator*

*Lena Brook-Program Associate*

*Sarah Knuth-Climate Change Workgroup Coordinator*



## Get Involved

Would you like to see healthier foods being served in the hospital where you work? Would you like to become a speaker for SF Bay Area PSR to deliver presentations on climate change or pediatric environmental health? Do you have some time to devote to environmental health advocacy work in your community? Are you interested in health care facilities working to improve patient, worker, and environmental health and safety? Please contact Lucia Sayre, SF Bay Area PSR Environmental Health Program Coordinator, for more information about any of our environmental health programs at 510-559-8777 or [Luciasayre@sbcglobal.net](mailto:Luciasayre@sbcglobal.net). Thanks!