

# N • E • E • T • F

The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation

## Health & Environment Newsletter

Winter 2003

### National Forum Outlines Strategies for Incorporating Environmental Health into Health Care Provider Education and Practice

More than 100 leaders in medicine, nursing, and environmental health set a course for action to achieve a national, interdisciplinary vision for environmental health outreach to health care providers, as part of The National Environmental Education & Training Foundation's *National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiative*.

Meeting at the *Initiative's* National Forum June 10-11, 2003 in Washington, DC, participants identified strategies and specific action items to expand the emerging nationwide network of health care providers committed to incorporating environmental health into primary care education and practice. One of the foremost recommendations was to develop a

position statement about the need for environmental health education for health professionals (see related story on page 2).

The *Initiative* is a collaborative effort among NEETF, the U.S.

Environmental Protection Agency, and the U.S. Departments of Health and Human Services, Agriculture, and Labor. Its purpose is to incorporate pesticide information into the education and practice of health care providers in order to improve the recognition, diagnosis, management, and prevention of adverse health effects from pesticide exposures while providing a model for

other environmental issues. The National Forum was cosponsored by the American Academy of Pediatrics, American Association of Colleges of Nursing, American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, Association of Academic Health Centers, Migrant Clinicians Network, and the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences and supported by the American Medical Association and Association of American Medical Colleges.

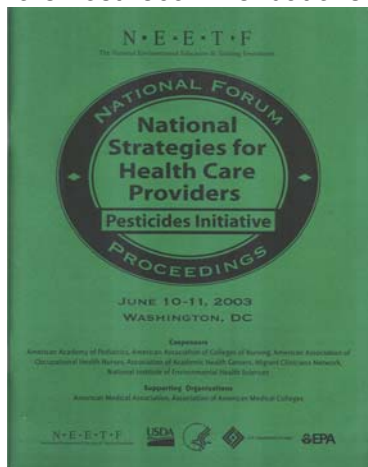
Many health professionals at the National Forum committed to undertaking activities at their medical and nursing organizations in order to increase pesticide and environmental health education for health care providers. In particular, several individuals agreed to seek national professional associations' endorsements of the *Initiative's* companion documents National Pesticide Competency Guidelines for Medical & Nursing Education and National Pesticide Practice Skills Guidelines for Medical & Nursing Practice (see next article). Participants also identified a range of strategies for integrating environmental health into primary health care provider education and practice, as well as opportunities for expanding existing provider resources on the topic.

The conference proceedings have been published and are also available on the web at <http://www.neetf.org/Health/publications.shtm>. NEETF will conduct a six-month follow-up survey to assess the progress of the conference commitments.

*Correction: Candace Burns, PhD, ARNP was inadvertently omitted from the list of National Guidelines authors, on page 7 of the conference proceedings.*

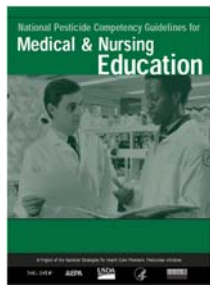
### The National Guidelines: New Tools for Health Care Providers to Learn More about Pesticides

As part of the *Pesticides Initiative*, NEETF has published the National Pesticide Competency

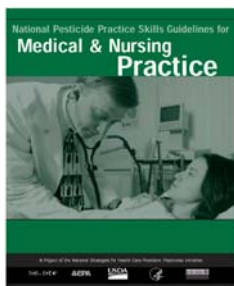


Guidelines for Medical & Nursing Education and the National Pesticide Practice Skills for Medical & Nursing Practice.

The Guidelines are targeted specifically toward front-line health care professionals—primary care physicians, nurses and nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and nurse midwives. They are filled with practical strategies for introducing environmental health content into saturated curricula and professional development offerings. The Pesticides Guidelines were authored by expert clinicians and academicians, including representatives of



the American Association of Colleges of Nursing, the American Association of Occupational Health Nurses, the National Organization of Nurse Practitioner Faculties, and the American Association of Pesticide Safety Educators and were



peer-reviewed. They are available in pdf format at <http://www.neetf.org/Health/publications.shtm>.

### **National Strategies for Health Care Providers Presented at the American Public Health Association Meeting**

At the APHA 2003 Annual Meeting in San Francisco, California, the panel session Infrastructure Development: Strategies for Incorporating Environmental Health into Health Care addressed the need for improvements in environmental health education of health professionals. Presentations included environmental risk communication, integration of environmental health into pediatric health care, using the National Pesticide Competency Guidelines for Medical & Nursing Education and the National Pesticide Practice Skills Guidelines for Medical & Nursing Practice as a template for educating clinicians about environmental health issues, and a *National Strategies for Health Care Providers* Forum report.

### **NEETF Develops Environmental Health Education Position Statement for Adoption by Medical, Nursing, and Public Health Organizations**

NEETF, with the assistance of a workgroup of representatives of medical and nursing organizations, academicians, physicians, and nurses, has developed a Health Professionals and Environmental Health Education position statement. The position statement, developed in response to the recommendation made by participants at the National Forum, summarizes the need for environmental health education and lists the specific actions necessary to successfully incorporate environmental health information into the education of health professionals.

Upon final release in January 2004, the statement will be presented to medical, nursing, and public health organizations for their support. Organizations will be able to use the statement as the framework for promoting environmental health education in their missions and activities.

The statement will be available at <http://www.neetf.org/Health/index.shtm>.

### **Coalition for Healthier Schools Hosts Successful Meeting with Guest Speaker Senator Hillary Clinton**

The Coalition for Healthier Schools hosted special guests Senator Hillary Clinton and American Public Health Association Executive Director Georges Benjamin, MD at their October 29, 2003 meeting.

The meeting, held at the headquarters of the APHA and led by Claire Barnett, Executive Director of the Healthy Schools Network, focused on building a platform for environmental health at school. Over thirty representatives from a variety of environmental, school, and health organizations attended. The coalition group brainstormed on developing a checklist for candidates on school health issues, produced recommendations and action items to further collaboration among school environmental health efforts, and generated ideas for tools for the National Healthy Schools Day in April 2004.

Senator Clinton and Dr. Benjamin encouraged the coalition to continue their successful work in advocating for healthier schools, and Clinton emphasized the importance of forwarding state reforms, which can provide models for future federal efforts.

Claire Barnett presented the National Training Binder developed by the Healthy Schools Network with funding from NEETF and the Wallace Genetic Foundation, which is to be used to educate and train regional, state and local organizations on issues related to a healthier school environment.

## Assessment of Health Care Providers Shows Need for Increased Environmental Health Education

An assessment of practicing health care providers has revealed that a majority of providers are not equipped to answer patient questions about pesticides or ask patients about possible pesticide exposure. The study "Attitudes, Beliefs, and Practices of Pediatric Health Care Providers Regarding Continuing Education on Pesticide Toxicity" was conducted to determine the current environmental health and pesticides knowledge of primary care providers and how they will best respond to educational programs and information resources.

The study confirms the results of past studies, which have shown that providers feel unprepared to deal with environmental health issues and many receive little or no education in environmental health. The study, conducted by the Center for Risk Science and Public Health at George Washington University for NEETF, showed clinicians lack both knowledge about pesticides and interest in pursuing continuing education on pesticides.

Over 60% of clinicians expressed that they felt poorly prepared to answer patients' questions and only 40% believe they needed further education on pesticides.

Practicing clinicians, a group that is difficult to change and has limited time, identified in the study specific preferences for getting pesticides education. Many providers spoke about the need to make any continuing education on pesticides clinically relevant and

suggested including pesticides as one topic among many at a continuing education conference. The abstract for the study, which has been submitted for publication, is available at <http://www.neetf.org/Health/assessment.htm>.

## Web-based Pesticides Resources Gateway to be on-line in 2004

NEETF, in partnership with Mark Robson, PhD, MPH, of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey School of Public Health, completed an inventory of pesticide resources to be used in creating a web-based Pesticides Resources Gateway for health care providers. A National Review Board composed of medical, nursing, and environmental health professionals is reviewing the approximately 300 resources. Until this website is operational, those looking for pesticide resources can browse the inventory at: <http://www.neetf.org/Health/inventory.htm>.



We invite you to look through the resources and offer suggestions of pesticide resources not yet included, or to send comments on the resources currently on the list to [pesticides@neetf.org](mailto:pesticides@neetf.org).

The Gateway will be a user-friendly, web-based source of pesticide information and educational resources for primary health care providers.

## Competencies for Environmental Triggers of Asthma: A Tool for Pediatric Health Care Providers

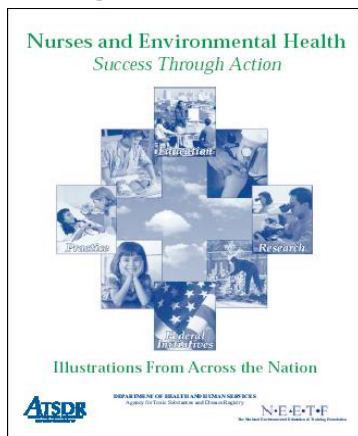
NEETF is launching a project to create competencies and environmental history forms

about environmental triggers of asthma for use by pediatric health care providers. NEETF will convene a group of experts in the field to develop the competencies. A complete inventory of existing resources will serve as the foundation for this effort. Suggestions should be sent to Leyla Erk McCurdy, Senior Director, Health & Environment Programs at [mccurdy@neetf.org](mailto:mccurdy@neetf.org).

A complementary project NEETF conducted in partnership with the Children's Environmental Health Network brought together workgroups of medical and nursing experts, who developed an Action Agenda for Incorporating Environmental Health into Pediatric Medical & Nursing Education. The Action Agenda describes the various phases of medical and nursing education and identifies leverage points for incorporating environmental health. The findings of this study are currently being prepared for publication and will be used to incorporate the asthma competencies into the education of health care providers. The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences has funded both projects.

## Environmental Health Resources:

### **Nurses and Environmental Health: Success Through Action**



NEETF, in partnership with the Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry, published Nurses and Environmental Health: Success Through Action; Illustrations From Across the Nation.

This publication presents examples of how nursing professionals successfully carry out environmental health activities. A news release announcing this publication was distributed on December 13, 2002 to approximately 500 media outlets, organizations, and individuals. An electronic version of this publication can be downloaded at

[www.neetf.org/health/publications.shtm](http://www.neetf.org/health/publications.shtm) and ordering information is available at [www.atsdr.cdc.gov/EHN](http://www.atsdr.cdc.gov/EHN).

## **Pediatric Environmental Health Published**

The American Academy of Pediatrics has published the second edition of Pediatric Environmental Health. The handbook, edited by pediatrician Ruth Etzel, a member of NEETF's Health & Environment Advisory Board, "features more than 40 chapters on identification, prevention and treatment of childhood environmental health problems." Topics include strategies to reduce asthma triggers in the environment, to prevent exposure to nitrates and methemoglobinemia in infants, and to reduce exposure to pesticides. Each chapter includes a list of frequently asked questions and responses, which makes this a handy desk reference for the busy clinician. To order, visit AAP's Web site at <http://www.aap.org>, call (888) 227-1770, or fax your request to (847) 228-1281.

## **New Staff Member joins the Health & Environment Program**

Rebecca Love joined NEETF as the Associate for the Health & Environment Programs in September 2003 with a background in environmental and public health. Prior to joining NEETF, Rebecca served as program assistant at the Children's Environmental Health Network, working on outreach, advocacy, and educational projects in children's environmental health. She graduated from Haverford College with a B.A. and is nearing the end of her course work for the Masters of Public Health, with a concentration in global health policy, at the School of Public Health and Health Services, George Washington University.

**Happy New Year!**