

# PSR REPORTS



PSR is the U.S. affiliate of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War, recipient of the 1985 Nobel Prize for Peace.

PHYSICIANS FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

VOL. 30 NO. 1  
SPRING 2008

## PSR Pushes for More Research and Regulation of Toxic Chemicals

**T**oxics toys have been a top story in media outlets since last fall. The initial reports uncovered lead in the paint on Fisher-Price toys manufactured in China. Then Mattel, Inc, the parent company of Fisher-Price, was forced to recall 83 different toys that contained choking hazards and dangerous levels of lead. Lead is a neurotoxin that poses particular dangers for small children.

In February, Sheela Sathyanarayana, M.D., MPH, and colleagues published a study in *Pediatrics* describing exposure to phthalates from baby personal care products. Phthalates are plasticizers that are added to products like shampoo and lotion to make their fragrances last longer. Phthalates are also found in food packaging, medical products, and toys. Among several concerns medical researchers have raised about phthalates is that they can alter human male reproductive development.

Infants and children are exposed to a wide array of risky chemicals, including bisphenol A, found in polycarbonate plastic food and water containers, the pesticides atrazine and vinclozolin, mercury, brominated flame retardants, and arsenic, as well as PCBs, which are banned but still ubiquitous, particularly in fish. A compilation of adverse health effects that have been attributed to

these chemicals includes endocrine disruption, reproductive hazards, cancer, altered brain development, and disruption in behavior.

Scientists are documenting an increasing prevalence among growing children of health problems such as cancer, asthma, learning disabilities, birth defects, and infertility. There is increasing evidence that toxic chemicals in our bodies, even at low levels, are significant contributors to this growing burden of disease. In fact, even small amounts of toxic chemicals can have large health effects if a person is exposed at times of critical development or exposed to a persistent or bioaccumulative toxin, which can create continuous, lifelong exposures.

We must ask whether the increasing prevalence of these diseases in our children signals a more pervasive threat. Many scientists, PSR health professionals, and other health advocates believe this to be the case. At the root of the problem are the 80,000 chemicals registered in the U.S.; for 80 percent of these, we lack any human health safety data. Our collective ignorance turns our children—the group most sensitive to chemical assaults—into unwitting test subjects in uncontrolled clinical trials.

The gap in our knowledge about chemical safety reflects a broken chemical management system. The federal regulation of chemicals must



be improved to limit human exposure to toxic chemicals. PSR chapters across the country are active in state alliances of doctors, nurses, environmental activists, children's advocates, and others working to ban dangerous chemicals and bring about comprehensive chemical policy reform.

PSR is helping to engage more health professionals in these state alliances. Doctors and nurses, the front-line guardians of citizen health, are ideally positioned to galvanize support for chemical policy reform, but efforts for reform have been sporadic and fragmented. In fact, the risk to health care professionals, as an occupational

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PSR's Environment and Health Program Director Kristen Welker-Hood (CENTER) speaks on a panel with Ginger Jordan-Hillier of the Maine Department of Environmental Protection, and Syd Sewall, M.D., a pediatrician and PSR/Maine board member, at the Toxics and Tomorrow's Children conference co-sponsored by the PSR chapter in Maine.

## PSR Works for Real Diplomacy with Iran

**W**ith the fifth anniversary of the war on Iraq just behind us, it's sobering to think that we may be moving closer to war with Iran. The recent resignation of the top U.S. commander in the Middle East,



Stephen Kinzer signs copies of his book at a chapter-organized event in Tampa.

Admiral William Fallon, means that the strongest voice in opposition to the Bush administration's strident policy towards Iran has been silenced. It was Fallon who saw the Iran challenge as a problem similar to the U.S. relationship with China—one that required direct diplomacy instead of military confrontation. The question is now, with Admiral Fallon gone, will the Iran hawks who opposed him have their way?

As it is, tensions between the United States and Iran have spiked over Iran's nuclear program. The International Atomic Energy Agency's most recent report states that, while Iran has made progress on clarifying a number of outstanding issues, the nation has failed to provide information on alleged past activities involving uranium enrichment, missile warhead design work, and

high-explosives tests. Iran calls these allegations "baseless and fabricated," and maintains that its program is for nuclear power only.

The Bush administration has declared its willingness to talk with Iran, but only after Iran stops enriching uranium. Such preconditions prevent any real progress. This is why PSR has been working to promote direct diplomacy with Iran through the concerted activities of our local chapters and board activists.

In February, PSR chapters worked with the New York-based organization Just Foreign Policy to bring renowned *New York Times* correspondent and Middle East expert Stephen Kinzer to their communities for educational events and media interviews. Kinzer, whose book *All the Shah's Men* chronicled past U.S. intervention in

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# Doctors Gather in India to Advocate for Nuclear Weapons Abolition

On March 9-12, 2008, more than 600 doctors and medical students from 44 countries gathered in New Delhi, India, for the 18<sup>TH</sup> World Congress of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW) to discuss and advance their shared commitment to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) and other topics related to peace, health, the environment, and social

justice. Vice President of India Shri M. Hamid Ansari gave a keynote address, and Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov sent a message which read, in part, "you contribute significantly towards strengthening international peace by promoting the understanding that there is no alternative to multilateral approaches in resolving major problems in world politics."

PSR board members Robert Gould, M.D., Jose Quiroga, M.D., and Ira Helfand, M.D., each made formal presentations at the meeting on topics including U.S. militarism, the U.S.-India peaceful nuclear cooperation agreement, torture, and the danger of "nuclear famine" resulting from a regional nuclear war. Dr. Gould also joined IPPNW delegations for meetings with the President and Prime Minister of India to promote nuclear disarmament. PSR Security Programs Director Douglas Shaw described PSR's commitment and work to advance ICAN across the ten categories of progress toward nuclear weapons abolition defined by IPPNW. In all,



more than a dozen PSR physician and student members participated actively in consultations with their counterparts from all over the world.

The World Congress came at a critical time for a dangerous proposed agreement between the United States and India that would bend international and U.S. law designed to prevent the spread of nuclear weapons, in order to allow "peaceful" nuclear cooperation between the two countries. PSR, IPPNW, and the Indian affiliate of IPPNW, Indian Doctors for Peace and Development (IDPD), joined in opposing the agreement, calling for its rejection by the U.S. Congress and the Indian Parliament, as well as by members of the international Nuclear Suppliers Group and the United Nations Security Council.

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*Health professionals from around the world attended IPPNW's 18th World Congress in India.*



## IRAN

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Iran, argued against a military attack on Iran and in favor of direct U.S. engagement without preconditions. PSR chapters helped organize his appearances in San Francisco, Chicago, Atlanta, and Tampa (the first community event for our newest chapter), as well as in Albuquerque, where PSR's Executive Director, Michael McCally, M.D., Ph.D., also spoke.

Taking the message directly to their Congressional representatives, PSR chapters in Massachusetts and Oregon held town meetings with their elected officials to urge them to advocate in Congress for direct talks with Iran.

Reaching out to the Iranian American community, PSR board member Kent Bransford, M.D., addressed the national meeting of the Iranian American Medical Association in Irvine, CA. Another board member, Catherine Thomasson, M.D., gave presentations in Oregon, Las Vegas, and Madison, WI, where she shared insights from her 2007 trip to Iran.

PSR doctors have argued for peaceful resolution to the Iran nuclear challenge on the editorial pages of their local newspapers. PSR President Erica Frank, M.D., M.P.H., reminded *Atlanta Journal-Constitution* readers that "in the years of escalating conflict over Iran's nuclear program, it is the tool of unconditional dialogue that has been held off the table." And in a guest editorial in the

*Des Moines Register* in March, PSR Board member Maureen McCue, M.D., Ph.D., fleshed out what a negotiated agreement between Iran and the U.S. might look like, including the U.S. forswearing the use of military force for regime change and Iran agreeing to intrusive international inspections to ensure that their nuclear program is not weapons-oriented.

Finally, PSR board members Robert Gould, M.D., and Vic Sidel, M.D., spearheaded a successful effort to pass a resolution through the American Public Health Association (APHA) calling on the U.S. to "clearly state it will not launch a preemptive military strike on Iran" and to vigorously pursue a diplomatic solution. **PSR**



*Tampa Bay event participants Don Mellman, M.D., of the PSR Tampa Bay chapter, and Mohsen Milani, Ph.D., chair of Department of Government and International Affairs at the University of South Florida*

## PSR to Host Iranian Physicians Tour

Over the past year, PSR has been deeply involved in the campaign to prevent a military strike against Iran. We have brought the issue before members of Congress and their staffs with an ad placed in *Congressional Quarterly* and the *Washington Post*. Former PSR President Catherine Thomasson, M.D., traveled to Iran with a delegation of citizens and activists to meet with Iranian government and civil leaders. While there, she got to know physicians and others interested in dialogue between the two countries. To build on this trip, PSR has developed an Iranian Physicians Tour. The Iranian Society for Chemical Weapons Victim Support and individual Iranian physicians will participate. We have planned events at medical institutions across the country. The goal is to put a human face on Iranian citizens and physicians. We view this tour as an important first step toward wider engagement of Iranian and American physicians in response to the impasse between our two nations, which has lasted far too long and is today accompanied by the terrible danger of war.

The tour will include events in Boston (April 27-29), Western Massachusetts (April 30), New York City (May 1), Los Angeles (May 3-6), and Washington, DC (May 7-9). For more information, please visit our website at [www.psr.org](http://www.psr.org).

*PSR Reports* (ISSN-0894-6264) is the newsletter of Physicians for Social Responsibility, a nonprofit organization. Guided by the values and expertise of medicine and public health, Physicians for Social Responsibility works to protect human life from the gravest threats to health and survival.

To receive *PSR Reports* regularly, we invite you to join PSR and support our work. Write to PSR, 1875 Connecticut Ave., NW, Suite 1012, Washington, DC 20009, or visit our website at [www.psr.org](http://www.psr.org).

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Leaving a bequest to PSR is a wonderful way to help continue the work you believe in so strongly. We suggest you check with an attorney or tax advisor to see how a bequest to PSR would fit into your estate plans. PSR's Tax ID number and office address are listed below for your convenience. Please contact Jill Hertzler by phone at (202) 587-5247 or by e-mail at [jhertzler@psr.org](mailto:jhertzler@psr.org) for more information.

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A gift of stock is also an excellent way to support PSR's work. Listed below is PSR's brokerage information. Please contact Jill Hertzler by phone at (202) 587-5247 or by e-mail at [jhertzler@psr.org](mailto:jhertzler@psr.org) for more information or to confirm receipt of your gift.

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## MATCH YOUR GIFT

Many companies provide matching gifts for employee charitable contributions. Please check to determine whether your gift to PSR will be met, doubled or tripled by your employer. It's a great way to make your gift go further to support PSR. Just include your company's matching gift form with your contribution, and we'll complete it, send it in, and let you know when your gift has been matched!

## STAY ACTIVE

**Would you like to be more involved in PSR's advocacy efforts?** A great place to start is PSR's Activist Updates. Each of PSR's program areas reaches out to members through Action Alerts and e-mail. To learn more about the Activist Updates, contact us here (information below) and be sure to mention what issues interest you most.

**Coming to Washington, DC, and have an hour to spare?** How about visiting one of your elected officials to talk about the issues of most concern to you? Contact the PSR office at least a week in advance, and we'll help schedule a meeting, provide you with background materials, and possibly even accompany you on your lobbying call.

#### Contact your elected officials:

U.S. SENATE, Washington, DC 20510

☎ (202) 224-3121

U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,

Washington, DC 20515

☎ (202) 224-3121

THE WHITE HOUSE, 1600 Pennsylvania Ave., NW

Washington, DC 20500

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## TOXIC CHEMICALS

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group, from workplace exposures to hazardous cleaning, disinfecting, and sterilizing agents, as well as radiation, mercury, potent medications, and other chemicals, has never been studied.

An important strategy for PSR's initiative is to recruit doctors and nurses to participate in the first biomonitoring study exclusively for health care professionals. Biomonitoring is an essential technique used to measure the extent to which chemical pollution is absorbed by our bodies from the air we breathe, the water we drink, the food we eat, and the products we use every day. The CDC uses this tech-

nique to monitor population-wide exposures nationally.

Building on the understanding that chemical policy reform benefits healthcare providers and their patients alike, PSR is contributing its credibility and expertise to a grassroots movement to protect the health of current and future generations. Our Health Care Professional Biomonitoring study is funded by national foundations, and we hope to enroll as many as 30 health professionals across the country in the project this spring.

For more information on PSR's Health Care Professional Biomonitoring study, please contact Mae Stevens by phone at (202) 587-5234 or by e-mail at [mstevens@psr.org](mailto:mstevens@psr.org). **PSR**

## INDIA

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PSR Deputy Security Program Director Jill Parillo met with opinion leaders in Delhi to build the case against the agreement, and former Canadian Senator Douglas Roche and others made public statements against the deal. The agreement is currently blocked on the Indian side by the Indian Communist Party, which holds 27 percent of the seats in India's parliament and is a crucial member of the current coalition government.

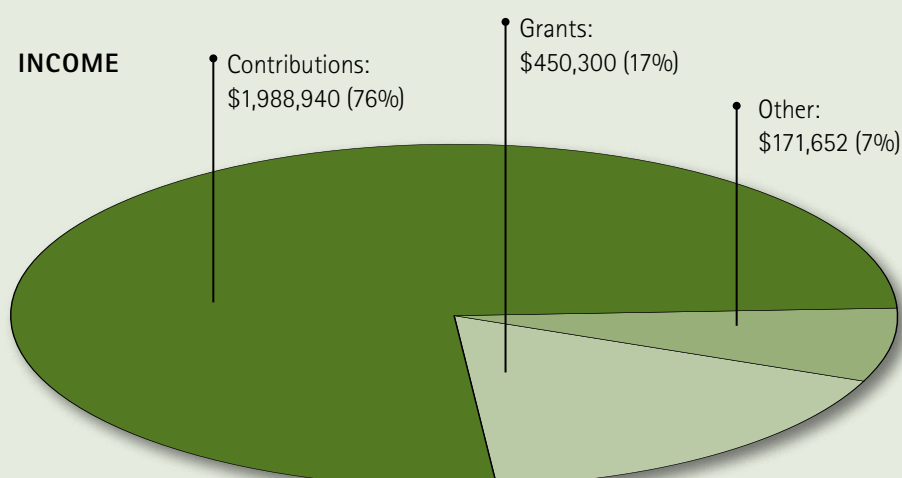
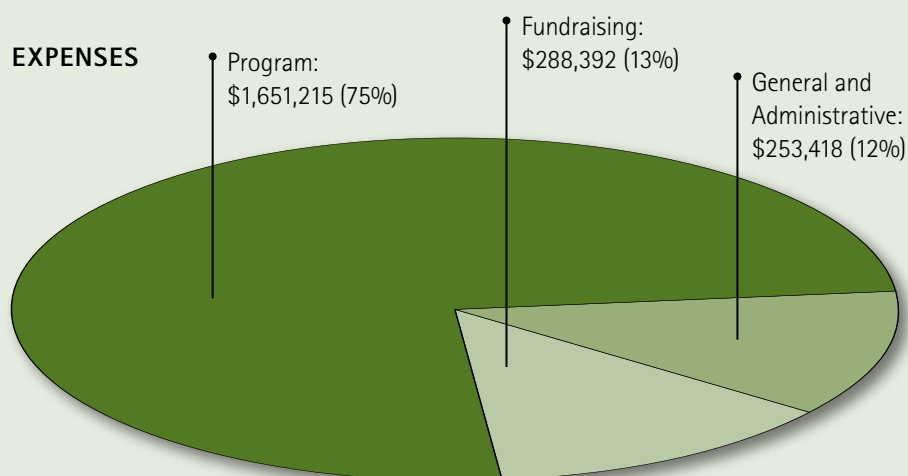
PSR, IDPD, and IPPNW oppose the deal because it weakens international legal rules against

the spread of nuclear weapons by making a special exception for India, a country that has refused to sign the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and maintains a nuclear arsenal. The proposed deal risks further eroding international law against the spread of nuclear weapons while promoting dangerous, dirty, and expensive nuclear reactors without meeting India's substantial and legitimate energy needs.

While India has long asserted that it supports nuclear disarmament, PSR joined IDPD and IPPNW in calling upon Indian leaders to demonstrate new leadership toward a world free of nuclear weapons. **PSR**

## PSR Financial Summary

Fiscal year 2007 (January 1 to December 31, 2007)



## Bid with Your Lid



Each year through its Profits for the Planet Program, Stonyfield Farm donates 10% of its profits to efforts that help protect and restore the earth. In 2008, Stonyfield Farm will donate funds to PSR's Confronting Toxics program through a special consumer promotion on its yogurt cup lids. Stonyfield Farm will print a promotional message on 20 million yogurt lids, asking consumers to "Bid with their Lids." Please cast your vote(s) to support PSR. Log onto [www.stonyfield.com](http://www.stonyfield.com) and enter 1 vote and/or collect the limited edition lids and cast multiple votes by mailing the lids to Stonyfield Farm (each lid equals 1 vote for PSR). Many thanks from PSR to you.

When you Bid with Your Lid, you will help support PSR's Confronting Toxics: a Medical and Nursing Campaign to Confront Toxic Chemical project, which uses medical expertise to publicize the urgency of the trespass of human-made chemicals on the American population.

## FROM THE PRESIDENT AND THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

# Code Black: PSR Takes Action on Coal-Fired Power Plants

In 2007, James Hansen, head of the NASA Goddard Institute and a leading climate scientist, told the U.S. Congress that “the most effective action that people can take to stem global warming... is to help prevent construction of coal-fired power plants until sequestration technology is ready.” PSR agrees.

Coal-fired power plants, used to generate electricity, account for more than one-third of all U.S. carbon emissions. Electrical utility companies plan to build more than 100 new coal-fired plants in the coming decades. These should not be built. New coal plants are a threat both to

our health and to our efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions.

In November 2007, PSR initiated a campaign called Code Black: Coal’s Assault on America’s Health. Our goal is to halt the construction of these new plants by bringing the medical and public health perspective on coal to decision-makers such as the local public utility districts, county commissioners, and public health boards that review and approve new plant applications. The campaign is a combined local chapter/national effort. PSR chapters in Iowa, Texas, and New Mexico have already brought the health message to public hearings, and many more are poised to do the same. PSR testimony in Iowa presented in January

helped influence the public health commission there to vote against a proposed plant (see box at left).

The health message against coal is critically important. Coal plants emit tons of toxic sulfur and nitrogen oxides, particulate matter, and volatile organic compounds each day. These chemicals, and the smog and ozone they produce, are leading contributors to cardiovascular and respiratory disease. A remarkable recent study of continuous heart recordings from patients with implanted monitors shows dangerous cardiac arrhythmias on days of poor air quality. Coal-fired power plants are also the source of mercury in our food. Pregnant women and children are especially vulnerable to the toxic effects of mercury, which can damage the brain and cause learning disabilities and attention deficit disorder. According to EPA estimates, as many as 600,000 children are born each year with dangerous levels of mercury in their bodies, probably because their mothers ate contaminated fish while pregnant.

Any strategy that employs the burning of the vast supplies of coal in the United States must require carbon capture and storage, as well as more stringent controls on the pollutants that we are forced to breathe. Otherwise, we are combusting ourselves toward disease and early graves.

Progress is already being made in the Code Black campaign. Two leaders in the House of Representatives, Ed Markey (D-MA) and Henry Waxman (D-CA), have introduced legislation to place a moratorium on the construction of all coal plants until they can be equipped with carbon capture and storage technology. In March, the federal government suspended a loan program for new coal plants in rural areas. Construction permits

are being denied or postponed in response to citizen action and litigation. PSR is party to a Sierra Club suit to halt the construction of the “Bonanza” plant in Deseret, Utah.

Each plant halted or withdrawn is a victory, because coal plants emit carbon on such a large scale. The emissions from just one medium-sized plant operating for just one month of each year would offset Wal-Mart’s half-billion-dollar program to reduce carbon emissions from its buildings.

Nuclear power remains a significant public health hazard. Though nuclear power plants produce limited carbon dioxide emissions, they are not a panacea for the threat of global warming. The mining, processing, transportation, storage, and disposal of nuclear ore, fuel, and wastes are incredibly expensive and produce millions of tons of carbon dioxide every year. In addition, the threat to workers and public safety during the nuclear life cycle is not acceptable.

PSR’s Code Black campaign is making a significant contribution to the protection of both individual and planetary health. We need your support urgently. Each day, we are called to participate in the struggle against new coal plants. The costs of preparing and sending speakers and of placing our targeted newspaper ads are mounting. Please consider a special gift to PSR to support this work.

ERICA FRANK, M.D., M.P.H.

MICHAEL MCCALLY, M.D.

## Coal-Fired Power Plant Opposition in Iowa

In January 2008, PSR’s Iowa chapter organized a series of meetings opposing a new coal-fired power plant. PSR’s Environment and Health Program Director Kristen Welker-Hood, D.Sc., M.S.N., R.N., joined Iowa chapter leader and PSR board member Maureen McCue, M.D., Ph.D., to deliver the message that coal-fired power plants are dangerous to human health. In Waterloo, they spoke at the Blackhawk County Board of Health meeting, after which the board passed a set of historic resolutions calling for a moratorium on coal because of compelling health questions. Welker-Hood was a panelist at an Iowa State Legislators meeting about global warming and health and testified before the Iowa Utility Board on the contested coal plant proposal. In Iowa City, Welker-Hood participated in a panel presentation on global warming. McCue and Welker-Hood’s efforts encouraged new citizen constituencies and underscored the power of the health argument against coal combustion.

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