Welcome to the new PSR Reports! We hope you are excited about our new look. We’ve tried to preserve what people loved about the old version while bringing in some bright new touches: more photos, tighter stories, and a more modern design. Let us know what you think!

Our redesign is part of a larger endeavor to update all of PSR’s publications and communications materials with a more contemporary look. This effort will culminate with a totally revamped website, which we expect to launch in the early part of 2018.

The fall issue has been exciting to put together in more ways than one. The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and ICAN’s Nobel Peace Prize have reinvigorated our entire organization. I hope these wins demonstrate to you that despite many challenges, our determination to turn back the gravest threats to our planet’s health and survival — climate change and nuclear weapons — is making a difference. Our work has felt more vital than ever this past year. Thank you for your support!

Jeff Carter, JD
Executive Director
WE ARE PSR

PRESIDENT
John Rachow, MD

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR
Jeff Carter, JD

DIRECTOR OF OPERATIONS
W. Taylor Johnson, MFA, DLS
(Executive Editor, PSR Reports)

ENVIRONMENT & HEALTH
PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Barbara Gottlieb

SECURITY PROGRAM DIRECTOR
Martin Fleck

SENIOR MANAGER
OF PHILANTHROPY
(Transition in progress)

TOXICS PROGRAM MANAGER
Kathy Attar

MEMBERSHIP MANAGER
Amy Ciciora

COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER
Elana Simon
(Senior Editor, PSR Reports)

WEB MANAGER
Julia Morgan

DATABASE MANAGER
Renee Nida

STUDENT PSR
PROGRAM COORDINATOR
Michelle Gin

INSIDE THIS ISSUE
4 | FROM THE PRESIDENT
5 | PUBLIC HEALTH SNAPSHOT
6 | THE NUCLEAR BAN BECOMES A REALITY
8 | THE NUCLEAR BAN: MORE THAN PAPER
9 | ICAN AWARDED NOBEL PEACE PRIZE
10 | A LIVABLE CLIMATE FOR ALL
12 | PEDIATRIC TOOLKIT
13 | SPEAKING OUT FOR HEALTH
14 | THE FUTURE OF PSR
16 | PSR FROM COAST TO COAST
18 | ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT


Photo: Thea Mjelstad, ICAN
FROM THE PRESIDENT

How time flies! PSR’s transition to our new executive director, Jeff Carter, is continuing apace. One cannot doubt that 2017 has been an interesting, if not hair-raising, year. Just as the U.S. announced plans to withdraw from the U.N. Paris climate accord, the environment is going nuts as evidenced by Harvey-Irma-Maria trumping the Katrina-Rita experience of 2005. And now we have leaders of nuclear-armed countries exchanging unhinged destabilizing schoolyard taunts from the dais of the U.N. General Assembly.

But there is ample reason for optimism...

In July, the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) achieved the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons. This landmark treaty categorically bans the last class of weapons of mass destruction and paves the road to abolition.

It has been an engaging year with our executive transition and the breakthrough on nuclear disarmament. I welcome our incoming board president for 2018, Pouné Saberi, MD, MPH, and the work ahead facing the challenges of global warming and climate change.

Most of all, I am deeply grateful to all of PSR’s loyal members and supporters who make our work possible through sustained, generous financial support.

John Rachow, MD, PhD
President, PSR Board of Directors

17 million people in the U.S. live within one mile of an active oil or methane well.

1,907 burn beds in the country couldn't cover a fraction of victims from a nuclear attack in one city.

160,000 premature deaths are prevented each year from the Clean Air Act.

6.57 million dollars per hour were diverted from human needs to U.S. nuclear weapons spending in 2016.
The fight for progress is never easy. This year, the nuclear crisis on the Korean Peninsula has at times seemed on the verge of spinning out of control, putting millions of lives at risk. Against this alarming backdrop, health advocates’ work to abolish nuclear weapons is more urgent than ever. On July 7, our international movement to draw the world’s attention to the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons culminated in a victorious vote to categorically ban the most lethal class of weapons of mass destruction. 122 nations voted to adopt the U.N. Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW).
A future free from nuclear weapons is starting to look possible. “This is a strong affirmation of PSR’s core message that nuclear weapons pose an existential threat to humanity and must be completely eliminated,” said PSR’s Ira Helfand, MD, a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) International Steering Committee. President of the U.N. treaty negotiating conference Elayne Whyte-Gómez announced, “We are saying to our children that, yes, it is possible to inherit a world free from nuclear weapons.” Hiroshima atomic bomb survivor Setsuko Thurlow addressed the U.N. conference, declaring, “This is the beginning of the end of nuclear weapons.”

The nuclear-armed countries did not get the memo. All nine boycotted the negotiations. Nuclear weapons remain central to their security policy. In fact, the United States’ $1.2 trillion plan to replace and extensively upgrade its nuclear arsenal risks spurring a new nuclear arms race. Until the first nuclear-armed country signs and ratifies the TPNW, the new treaty compels no nation to dismantle existing nuclear weapons. So what difference will it make?

The TPNW inaugurates a new context for nuclear weapons policy. The old nuclear paradigm failed to compel nuclear-armed countries to pursue disarmament because it tolerated nuclear weapons as valuable tools of “defense.” This archaic line of thinking is evident in the rhetoric surrounding the North Korean crisis, where President Trump and North Korean leader Kim Jong-un’s threats of mass destruction are disguised as tactics to pursue their nation’s security. By contrast, a growing number of nations are lining up for signature and adopting the health and humanitarian principles embedded in the TPNW. To garner support for the treaty, the World Medical Association, International Council of Nurses, World Federation of Public Health Associations, and International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War jointly called the treaty “a significant forward step.” These are the seeds of progress.

We don’t expect the U.S. or the other nuclear-armed countries to be signing the treaty any time soon. But the significance of the treaty lies beyond whether or when the U.S. and these other countries sign the treaty. The power of this treaty is that it sets in motion new global norms that reject and stigmatize nuclear weapons. This is the “long game” that PSR and our international partners are playing to win. This will take time—and some days it seems we do not have enough time. But there is no known shortcut, and the alternative is unthinkable.

We each have a role to play in bringing this new thinking into the mainstream. As Americans, we live in a nation whose policies have immense impact—and where citizens can have tremendous influence. Our work is just beginning.

“Important progress is rarely easy... There was a lot of resistance when slavery was abolished. There was plenty of opposition when women fought for the right to vote. The fights for civil rights, to end apartheid, these weren’t met with unanimous support by all. Progress doesn’t just happen when everyone is ready, it must be fought for, and someone has to be brave and lead.”

Beatrice Fihn
Executive Director
International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN)
MORE THAN PAPER

The Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons is a milestone international agreement that creates pathways toward the total elimination of nuclear weapons.

FILLS THE LEGAL GAP

Before the TPNW, nuclear weapons were the only class of weapons of mass destruction that were not prohibited under international law. The treaty categorically outlaws nuclear weapons, including their possession.

CULTIVATES NORMS

The TPNW creates an international norm stigmatizing nuclear weapons. All other weapons of mass destruction were first stigmatized by the international community before achieving their sharp curtailment.

COMPENSATES VICTIMS

The treaty requires assistance to nuclear victims and environmental remediation of contaminated areas. The TPNW recognizes the disproportionate impact of nuclear weapons on women and indigenous people.

VERIFICATION STANDARDS

The TPNW requires an international authority to verify the irreversible elimination of nuclear weapons programs, including all nuclear weapons facilities.
When the Norwegian Nobel Committee awarded the 2017 Nobel Peace Prize to the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) on October 6, it made it much more difficult to ignore the newly adopted Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW). The Committee recognized ICAN for raising awareness on the humanitarian impacts of nuclear weapons and achieving the landmark treaty. PSR’s international federation, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), founded ICAN in 2007 to mobilize civil society across 100 countries for a nuclear ban. PSR is a partner organization of ICAN.

PSR is honored to work with ICAN by contributing scientific data on the medical consequences of nuclear weapons. PSR’s health professionals were leaders since the onset of the Humanitarian Impact campaign. Representatives from PSR also attended the 2017 negotiations to lobby nations to vote for the treaty. Jeff Carter, PSR executive director, told NPR in an interview, “The prize feels like validation for all the work we’ve done. We know that the nuclear ban is a lofty goal but we believe it’s an achievable goal.”

We congratulate ICAN and our members for this astounding victory. The Nobel Peace Prize will help enliven our work to build a humanitarian movement for nuclear abolition in the United States.
Climate change is a health crisis that disproportionately harms the most vulnerable populations. Low-income people, communities of color, the very young, the elderly, and the disabled are the frontline communities that are hardest-hit by climate crises. When Hurricane Irma struck Florida, many Floridians found safety out of reach, physically or financially. Two-thirds of Florida’s 828,000 mobile homes were not constructed to withstand hurricanes. Hurricane Irma destroyed 300,000 migrant workers’ homes across the state. Thousands of seniors were trapped for days in their homes without electricity or medical attention. At least eight seniors died at a nursing home from overwhelming heat and humidity after the air conditioning failed.
Partnerships between health professionals and frontline communities are critical in order to design policies that will improve community resiliency and health in the face of hurricanes and other climate change-related extreme weather. Next year, working with three partner organizations and the financial support of U.S. Climate Action Network, PSR will launch one such partnership. PSR, the Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments, Moms Clean Air Force and the U.S. Climate & Health Alliance will organize a convening to bring our health activists together with grassroots climate activists in Miami. The face-to-face event will build relationships that, over time, will allow us to advocate together in the face of future climate crises.

Like other frontline communities, Miamians now face the long-term health impacts in Hurricane Irma’s aftermath. More than 84 million gallons of wastewater overflowed into residential areas. When exposed to toxic waters, minor cuts, which are common after hurricane-level winds destroy infrastructure and toss debris, risk becoming life-threatening infections. An EMT treating a child with an “oozing laceration” in her leg told Naples Daily News, “It’s basically sewage in here.” Exposure to toxic waters killed one person and hospitalized at least a dozen others in an impoverished fishing community in Everglades City, according to USA Today.

This year’s surge of hurricanes will not be our last. While scientists cannot attribute any individual weather event to climate change, we know that climate change increases the frequency and intensity of severe storms. PSR is committed to developing solutions that cultivate health and equity on the road to recovery from climate change.

It is clear that we must do better to help vulnerable populations prepare for extreme weather events and to recover afterwards. We look forward to working with local activists and organizations to shape this work, but ultimately to stem the effects of climate change, it is clear that we have to move away from dirty fossil fuels and toward clean renewable energy solutions.

Marybeth Dunn, MPH
Executive Director, PSR Florida
More than 90 percent of people in the U.S. have Bisphenol A (BPA), an organic synthetic compound, in their bodies. Found in certain plastics, research suggests that seepage of BPA into foods and beverages may have health effects on fetuses, infants, and children. What strategies can clinicians recommend to help reduce exposure to these harmful chemicals?

Our updated Pediatric Environmental Health Toolkit (PEHT) for clinicians offers an evidence-based approach on how to reduce patients’ exposure to BPA and other health hazards found in air, water, food, and consumer products.

Here are four ways to reduce exposure to BPA:

1. Instead of plasticware, use glass, stainless steel or ceramic to store food.
2. If plastics cannot be avoided, choose wisely. Check the symbol on the bottom of plastics containers and try to AVOID the plastics marked 3 (PVC or Vinyl), 6 (Polystyrene), or 7 (Other—can contain BPA).
3. Avoid canned or processed foods. Instead, eat fresh!
4. Keep carpets and windowsills clean—vacuum with HEPA vacuum and damp dust frequently to minimize dust that may contain BPA.

Visit www.psr.org to access the PEHT.
Peter Wilk, MD
@peterdwilk
#nuclearban treaty finally at UN, ready for national signatures. Why not the US? Nuclear weapons do not belong in the twenty-first century!

Oregon PSR
@OregonPSR
BREAKING: Washington Department of Ecology denies water permit to proposed #coal export facility in Longview. Huge victory!! #powerpastcoal

Martha Arguello
@MarthaDinaPSRLA
Thx @SenKamalaHarris for your leadership to #protectCAkids from brain damaging chlorpyrifos.

Greater Boston PSR
@gb_psr
. @EPAScottPruitt’s move to scrap the #CleanPowerPlan is bad news for #publichealth. PSR’s report explains why

Robert Dodge, MD
@bobdodge
Anti-nuclear weapons group ICAN wins Nobel Peace Prize - started by @IPPNW affiliate of @DocsSpeakOut #nuclearban

Kathy Attar, MPH
@kattar9
A stronger #RGGI is a win-win for our health and our economy in Baltimore and throughout Maryland. @ChesapeakePSR

Alan H Lockwood, MD
@AlanHLockwoodMD
Eclipses, vaccines, computers, plastics, antibiotics, TV, radio, and #climatechange are real. Unicorns are not

Damon Motz-Storey
@DamonMotzStorey
pretty sure my roommate is tired of me spouting nuclear bomb facts at him while he’s playing Fallout

Washington PSR
@psr_washington
Support sane policy today by thanking @RepDennyHeck for making it harder to use #nuclear weapons first! #nonukes

JOIN THE CONVERSATION. ARE YOU FOLLOWING US?

@DocsSpeakOut
/psrnational
/psrnational
THE FUTURE OF PSR

PSR board member and immediate past-president Lynn Ringenberg, MD, FAAP (Emeritus Professor of Pediatrics, University of South Florida), along with Student PSR leader at USF Health James “Dustin” Denham (third-year medical student), and Student PSR leader at USF Health in 2012 Stephen Mayper, MD (current third-year resident in Internal Medicine-Pediatrics), discuss their engagement with PSR.

➢ How did you get involved with PSR?
  **Ringenberg:** I got involved about ten years ago when I became aware and disturbed that children’s health issues were getting worse, like asthma, autism, and behavioral issues. I started looking into environmental causes, and co-founded the PSR Tampa Bay chapter in 2008, expanding state-wide in 2012.

➢ How did a student-mentor relationship develop between you and Dr. Ringenberg?
  **Mayper:** Dr. Ringenberg met with our Student PSR leadership regularly to help inspire events and make our ideas successful. Even now that I am a resident, Dr. Ringenberg has continued to meet with those of us interested in health advocacy, keeping us informed of upcoming marches and meetings where we can take real action and advocate on behalf of our community.

➢ What PSR issues are you most passionate about?
  **Denham:** For me, both nuclear nonproliferation and climate change pose significant threats to the survival of humanity. As physicians, we are incumbent to care for the health of all human beings where possible, and with PSR we can make a change.

➢ As a mentor, what events have you worked on with students in the health professions?
  **Ringenberg:** Our most successful events have been using gardening to talk to elementary kids about nutrition, diabetes, exercise, and eating healthy. Our Peace Luncheon in August showed films of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. We also have noon lectures throughout the year on climate change and health, water issues, and environmental issues where we discuss how students and physicians can get involved with advocacy and policy decision-making.

➢ How has your experience working with PSR affected your long-term interest in physician advocacy?
  **Mayper:** In two big ways. First, seeing the example set by Dr. Ringenberg and other local physician-advocates helped put a face to health advocacy and make it tangible. Second, PSR broadened my perspective on how physicians can engage in improving community health, opening my eyes to important community health issues, like the locations of local Superfund cleanup sites and the health impacts of nearby power plants.

➢ Are there any issues either your mentor or PSR has introduced you to that you were not interested in before, but are now interested in learning more about?
  **Denham:** Dr. Ringenberg’s lecture on nuclear weapons definitely made me more passionate about that topic. I had always believed the danger of nuclear weapons to be overstated, but now, I realize that they are understated. Nuclear weapons are world-ending tools that must never be used and, with the help of PSR and like-minded organizations, we can affect global change and reduce the threat of nuclear weapons. **PSR**
Communities across the Pacific Northwest can breathe easier after health advocates helped clinch a huge victory for public health. The Washington Department of Ecology denied a key permit for Millennium’s proposed coal terminal in Longview, Washington, effectively ending coal exports in the region. Public and environmental health issues were central to the decision. As Director Maia Bellon tweeted, “I have denied Millennium’s proposed coal terminal... Harm to the environment would be too great.”

Shutting down the coal terminal blocks 44 million tons of coal shipments per year. The proposed site would have piled coal eight stories high and 50 football fields wide. At a time when we’re urgently trying to curb carbon emissions, the trains carrying coal to the terminal would have added an equivalent of eight million cars to the road. Further, the trains would have discharged toxic coal dust into nearby communities, contributing to higher rates of cancer across the region.

Health professionals from PSR Washington and PSR Oregon helped educate the public and policymakers on the health impacts of the coal terminal. Laura Skelton, executive director of PSR Washington, notes: “There is no place for dirty coal in our region’s future. Communities across the Pacific Northwest are calling for policies to reduce greenhouse gas pollution and incentivize clean, renewable energy.”

PSR Washington and PSR Oregon achieved a major step forward in the fight against coal and fossil fuels. This victory energizes us to build pathways toward a healthy, renewable energy future. PSR
LOCAL CATALYST: A COMMUNITY SYMPOSIUM ON CLIMATE CHANGE AND NUCLEAR WAR

What can you and your neighbors do to prevent war with North Korea? This fall, community members across Western Massachusetts showcased how local actions can build momentum for global solutions. Nearly 130 people attended a PSR Pioneer Valley symposium on September 23 in Hadley, Massachusetts to get the facts on nuclear dangers and take action.

Physicians, academics, religious leaders, and environmental advocates participated in panel discussions and led workshops, focusing on how climate change increases the risks of nuclear war.

“Climate change comes along and conditions deteriorate horribly,” said Professor Michael Klare of Hampshire College. “Inequality will lead to conflict and violence.”

The symposium concluded with a clear call to action. Ira Helfand, MD, PSR national board member, introduced a resolution calling on the U.S. government to take concrete steps toward disarmament. Symposium speakers encouraged participants active in local government, faith groups, unions, and other community organizations to introduce similar resolutions to garner public support for disarmament. Our grassroots movement to revitalize the American public’s support for nuclear abolition is beginning to take root. PSR

To help us grow the movement and learn more about PSR Pioneer Valley’s resolution, visit www.psr.org.
ACTIVIST SPOTLIGHT

IRA HELFAND, MD

PSR’s Celebration of Visionary Leaders on November 9 gathered health advocates and PSR allies from across the country to honor the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons (TPNW) and Ira Helfand, MD, PSR national board member. The Embassy of Mexico Cultural Institute in Washington, DC graciously hosted the event in light of Mexico’s leadership in the global movement to totally eliminate nuclear weapons.

Dr. Helfand is a co-founder and past-president of PSR, and is currently the co-president of PSR’s global federation, International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). As a member of the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) Steering Committee, he is a leader in the civil society movement that achieved the TPNW. Dr. Helfand relayed PSR’s scientific data on the medical consequences of nuclear weapons to national delegations at a series of intergovernmental conferences from 2013 to 2014. He also presented to delegates in May 2016 at the U.N. Open-Ended Working Group on Disarmament in Geneva that led to the 2017 treaty negotiations. He coauthored articles in the New England Journal of Medicine in October 2015 and World Medical Journal in November 2016. He also wrote the November 2013 IPPNW/PSR report “Nuclear Famine: Two Billion People at Risk?” which documented the global health impacts of a regional nuclear war. Dr. Helfand has worked for many years as an emergency room physician and now practices internal medicine at an urgent care center in Springfield, Massachusetts.

“PSR provides a powerful vehicle for doctors and other health professionals to address the gravest threats to human survival. As physicians we have a unique and critically important message about the dangers of nuclear war and climate change. PSR brings that message to the public debate about these issues.”

Ira Helfand, MD
LET'S BUILD A CULTURE OF HEALTH

Help cultivate the movement for public health by making a gift to PSR.

You can include PSR in your will or living trust. A gift of stock will also support PSR's work for public health.

Many companies provide charitable matching gifts for employee charitable contributions.

To learn more, contact our Membership Department at (202) 667-4260 or psrnatl@psr.org.
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. Sign up to receive updates at psr.org.

Coming to Washington, DC, and have an hour to spare? 
How about visiting one of your elected officials to talk about issues of most concern to you? Contact PSR and we’ll help schedule a meeting and provide you with background materials.