



CARIBBEAN CURRENTS

Volume 5, Number 3
July 1997
EPA/220/N-97-001



Welcome..

...to **CARIBBEAN CURRENTS**, Volume Five, Number Three. This newsletter is edited by INFOTERRA/USA in its capacity as the Regional Service Centre (RSC) for INFOTERRA National Focal Points (NFPs) in the English and French-speaking Caribbean. Although the *CURRENTS* is assembled at INFOTERRA/USA, the content belongs to you, the readers. You are encouraged to send in any questions, comments, problems, or interesting issues relevant to the Region for inclusion in the *CURRENTS*. Please see the Guidelines for Contributions on page 4 for more information.

Each issue will feature a Directory of NFPs in the Region so that anyone with international environmental questions can contact their nearest resource. Please feel free to contact one another as well as your RSC for assistance or materials.

Please don't hesitate to share *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* with your friends and colleagues, and to make copies as needed. The Currents should serve as an informational forum for anyone who lives, works, or is involved in environmental issues in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region.

CHILDREN'S HEALTH

This issue's topic is children's health. Throughout the world, children face significant threats from an array of environmental hazards. EPA has recently established a new Office of Children's Health Protection, and is calling international attention to the issue by making it a centerpiece at the upcoming meeting of Environment Ministers from G-7 countries.

The next issue of *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* will look at emerging global environmental issues. The U.S EPA has recently issued a report on major environmental threats to the world's ecosystems. These threats include climate change, ozone depletion, long range transport of toxic substances, loss of biodiversity and ocean degradation.

If you have any comments on this topic, or would like to contribute a short article or have a resources guide to share, please submit your contribution following the guidelines on page 5. Please feel free to fax, write to, or call the RSC with any questions or comments you have. Share information you have and we will include it in the next or a future issue of *CURRENTS*. Thank you for your assistance.

Protecting Children from Environmental Threats

Introduction

Throughout the world, children face significant threats from an array of environmental hazards. They may absorb some pollutants more rapidly and eat more foods, drink more liquids and breathe more air in proportion to body weight than the typical adult. Their neurological, immunological, reproductive, digestive, and other bodily systems are still developing, providing windows of vulnerability for adverse effects. Children are less able to recognize and protect themselves from exposure to environmental pollutants, and childhood activities put them in closer contact with environmental hazards. By virtue of their youth, children exposed to environmental pollutants have a long period during which latent effects may become manifest.

In September 1996, The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency published a report on Environmental Health Threats to Children and a National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats (EPA 175-F-96-001). This publication highlights the EPA's commitment to better protect children from environmental threats and outlines a seven-step national agenda for action. EPA has forged ahead, taking steps to implement the agenda by establishing a new Office of Children's Health Protection and calling international attention to the issue by making children's environmental health a centerpiece of the upcoming meeting of Environment Ministers from G-7 countries, which Administrator Carol Browner will host.

The Problem¹

Dr. Philip Landrigan, M.D., M.Sc., renowned environmental health pediatrician and author, will head EPA's new Office of Children's Health Protection. Below are excerpts from Dr. Landrigan's writings, including the recently published book, "Raising Children Toxic Free."

Children today live in a world vastly different from that of a generation or two ago². Most children in America in 1997 are better fed and better educated than children of generations past. Thanks to vaccines, antibiotics, and improved nutrition, many once lethal pediatric diseases have been virtually eradicated. The life span of an infant born today is substantially longer than that of children born in the first half of this century.

At the same time, our children face hazards in the environment that were neither known nor imagined decades ago. They are exposed to old hazards such as lead and asbestos. But also they are exposed to more than 70,000 newly developed synthetic chemicals that did not exist before 1950. The potential dangers of most of these materials have never been tested. And while children's exposures to some health hazards in the environment have receded--thanks to research, new regulations and public vigilance--children today are in contact on a more constant basis than ever before with synthetic chemicals in their food, in the air, in drinking water and in their homes.

Toxic environmental exposures, coupled with the control of many traditional pediatric illnesses, have changed the face of childhood disease. Chronic illnesses in children, some

EPA's Response⁴

EPA recognizes that children's environmental health issues are a top priority and must become a central focus of all of EPA's efforts to protect public health and the environment. We thus challenge our partners in the private sector, throughout the many levels of government, in Congress, in academia and in interest groups to help implement the EPA National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats.

EPA commits to specific actions to better protect children from environmental threats. We will ensure wherever possible that all of the standards EPA sets are protective enough to address the potentially heightened risks faced by children and that the most significant existing standards will be re-evaluated as we learn more. We will identify and expand scientific research opportunities on child-specific susceptibility and exposure to environmental pollutants, and we will develop new policies to address cumulative and simultaneous exposures faced by children. EPA will work to provide better information for families so that they will have the tools to protect themselves and we will call upon parents, teachers and community leaders to take personal responsibility for learning about the hazards that environmental problems pose to our children. EPA plans to expand educational efforts in partnership with health and environmental professionals to identify, prevent and reduce environmental health threats and we commit to provide the necessary funding to address children's environmental health issues as a top priority among relative health risks. These commitments, which are further detailed in EPA's National Agenda to Protect Children's Health from Environmental Threats, will ensure that children receive the protection they need and deserve and help our nation fulfill its obligation to protect future generations.

For more information on EPA's actions to protect children from environmental threats or to learn about the new Office of Children's Health Protection, call Ms. Courtney Manning at (202) 260-7960.

¹Much of this section is taken from Needleman HL, Landrigan PJ, *Raising Children Toxic Free* New York Avon Books, 1995

²Needleman HL, Landrigan PJ- *Raising Children Toxic Free*. New York. Farrar, Strauss and Giroux, 1994

³Haggerty R, Roghmann J, Press IB *Child Health and the Community* New York John Wiley and Sons, 1975

⁴*Environmental Health Threats to Children, EPA 175-F-96-001* Washington, D C.. United States Environmental Protection Agency, 1996

INTERNET SITES ON CHILDREN'S HEALTH

A few of many sources of electronic information on children's health.



PedsCCM: International Child Health Page

<http://pedscm.wustl.edu/ICHealth.html>

Includes links to "front line reports" and other resources on the Internet. Other links featured are clinical resources, clinical research, organizations, meetings and opportunities.

Global ChildNet

<http://edie.cprost.sfu.ca/gcnet/index.html>

Features links to databases and the newsletter *Global Child Health News and Review*. Also includes transcripts from the Second Child Health 2000 Congress and Exhibition (held in 1995) and information on the Third Child Health 2000 Congress and Exhibition to be held in 1998.

World Health Organization Division of Child Health and Development

<http://cdrwww.who.ch/default.htm>

This site has multiple links to useful research, information, publications and diseases that affect children around the world.

United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF)

<http://www.unicef.org>

This site features a newslines to keep up with the latest UNICEF developments, as well as a link to view or download publications. Also featured is the UNICEF Report, *State of the World's Children, 1997*.

International Pediatric Association (IPA)

<http://www.urmc.rochester.edu/IPA/welcome.htm>

The goal of this organization is to improve the health and welfare of children throughout the world. The site features links to the publications of the association, as well information on the many workshops sponsored by it.

Children's Defense Fund

<http://www.tmn.com/cdf/index.html>

The Children's Defense Fund is a non-profit organization dedicated to educating the public about the needs of children. The site features a "Child Health Now" link with information and articles on current U.S legislation related to children's health. Links to reports, publications and other sites of interest are also provided.

Conferences on Child Health



October 20-22, 1997 -- *Community-based Child Development Program*, Thailand. To learn about this, and other upcoming workshops sponsored by the International Pediatric Association (IPA), visit their website at the address given previously, or contact them via e-mail at .

August 9-14, 1998 -- *XXII International Congress of Pediatrics*, Amsterdam, the Netherlands. Contact Jan van Goyenkade, 11, 1075 HP Amsterdam, the Netherlands, Telephone (31) 20-679-3411, FAX: (31) 20-673-7306, E-mail: eurocongres@rai.nl, Internet: http://www.rai.nl/ipa_98.

May 30-June 3, 2000 -- *Year 2000 Child Health World Congress and Exposition*, Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Sponsored by Global Child Health Society. Visit the Global ChildNet website mentioned previously, or contact the Year 2000 Congress Planning Committee via e-mail at gchs@web.apc.org.

NEW UNITED NATIONS PUBLICATIONS CATALOGUE (1997-1998) NOW AVAILABLE

The new 1997-1998 United Nations Publications Catalogue is now available. It includes all titles currently available. Catalogues of French and Spanish materials are also available. For more information, contact:

United Nations Publications
2 United Nations Plaza
Room DC@-853, Dept. C005
New York, NY 10017
Telephone: (212) 963-8302 or (800) 253-9646
FAX: (212) 963-3489
E-Mail: publications@un.org
Internet://<http://www.un.org/Publications>

Guidelines for Contributions to *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS*

Any organization or individual operating or involved in the English and French-speaking Caribbean Region is welcome to contribute to the newsletter. Contributions should be addressed to:

Caribbean Currents Coordinator
INFOTERRA/USA
U.S. Environmental Protection Agency
Headquarters Library, 3404
401 M Street, S.W.
Washington, D.C. 20460
UNITED STATES

Telephone: (202) 260-5917; Fax: (202) 260-3923; E-mail: library-infoterra@epamail.epa.gov

Please note that submissions should meet the following criteria:

- They should be relevant to environmental issues
- They must be of interest to or directly involve the Region
- They must not endorse or recommend any product or commercial service, explicitly or implicitly
- They must be brief--under 250 words, Bulletin Board requests should be under 100 words
- They must be received by the posted deadline (see below)

Please feel free to contact the *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* coordinator if you are interested in submitting a longer article. You should contact the coordinator to discuss your topic and any size or content restrictions beforehand. Be aware that once your article is submitted, it is subject to editing as needed. Final decisions on editing and inclusion of any contributions are left to the INFOTERRA/USA Manager. Please contact INFOTERRA/USA using the address above to contribute any comments, questions, problems, or ideas.

DEADLINE FOR CONTRIBUTIONS TO Vol. 5, No. 4: September 10, 1997

Welcome to The *CARIBBEAN CURRENTS* Bulletin Board

Each issue, we will publish questions or concerns of interest to CURRENTS readers. Anyone who has materials or information that they are seeking or that they feel will be helpful should feel free to contribute. We will post queries and offerings of general interest on the Bulletin Board. You may respond by contacting the reader who has placed the item, or the RSC.

Bulletin Board



DOCUMENTS AVAILABLE

INFOTERRA/USA has free copies of the following publications available.

If you would like copies of any of these documents, please let us know.

- EPA National Publications Catalog October 1996
- Emerging Global Environmental Issues (U.S. EPA, Office of International Activities), January 1997, (EPA160-K-97-001)
- Environmental Health Threats to Children (U.S. EPA, Office of the Administrator), September 1996, (EPA175-F-96-001)

To request copies of these documents, just write to INFOTERRA/USA using the contact information on page 7



Information Needed on Global Issues

The next issue of *Caribbean Currents* will focus on emerging global environmental issues. We would be interested in receiving any information on projects or studies related to the issues outlined earlier (biodiversity, climate change, ozone depletion biodiversity or ocean degradation) and how the region is being affected. These materials will also be kept on file for the benefit of researchers and visitors to INFOTERRA.

Please contact INFOTERRA/USA using the information on page 7 if you can provide any assistance. Thank you for your support!

Send your Bulletins to the RSC for publication in the next issue. See the Guidelines on page 5 for information on submitting items.

About the NFP Directory

This directory reflects changes and additions to the INFOTERRA Directory of National Focal Points distributed by INFOTERRA/PAC, dated January 1997. Please check this information to verify that it is correct and up-to-date. If you have any changes or corrections, please notify the RSC as soon as possible. We will be happy to relay the information to the PAC.

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