MAJOR ACCOMPLISHMENTS of 2015
REFLECTIONS ON 2015
2015 was a remarkable year of accomplishments. Our work led to reproductive health professionals from around the world saying we have had enough of toxic chemicals contaminating our environment and our bodies. Our work cemented a better way to evaluate the evidence linking chemical exposures and adverse health outcomes. Our research advanced new methods to better measure the vast array of chemicals present in our environment. Now we have new partners and new tools to address and prevent harmful chemical exposures.

Our work to ensure a toxic free environment for this and future generations only happens because of hard, persistent work with many and varied partners around the globe, partners like you. We want to take this opportunity to thank you and everyone who works with us in our mission to create healthier environments and healthier people everywhere.
The Environmental Health Initiative (EHI), a collaborative transdisciplinary network of UCSF academics committed to solving the growing burden of chronic diseases by identifying and preventing harmful environmental exposures.

In 2015, we launched The Environmental Health Initiative (EHI), a collaborative transdisciplinary network of UCSF academics committed to solving the growing burden of chronic diseases by identifying and preventing harmful environmental exposures.

The EHI is led by PRHE’s Director, Professor Tracey Woodruff and by Professor Diana Laird of the UCSF Department of Obstetrics, Gynecology, and Reproductive Sciences. The EHI was started with seed funding from the Ob/Gyn & RS Department.

EHI hosted a strategic planning meeting in May attended by over fifty enthusiastic researchers and leaders from across the UCSF campus, all expressing desire to continue to connect and collaborate. Since then, UCSF/ EHI hosted a highly successful speed-networking event to facilitate new collaborations. EHI has also started a chemicals industry documents collection to complement UCSF’s already world-recognized tobacco industry documents collection at the UCSF Library. The new collection is critical because it documents the chemical industry’s strategy for influencing policy decisions about chemicals. We will continue to lead and nurture this initiative and to provide the structure that will enhance its growth.
Pregnancy Exposures to Environmental Chemicals (PEEC) Children’s Center

2015 was a year of growth for our research program.

We completed the first stage of evaluating the effects of flame retardant exposure on the placenta using our placental stem cell cultures. Look for our paper: Modeling the Effects of EDCs on Early Stages of Human Placental Development. We are also finishing a collection of placental samples to evaluate how chemicals affect placental development and growth. Finally, we have succeeded recruiting a diverse sample of pregnant women, and we continue to do so as we enroll for our project: Effects of EDCs and Chronic Psychosocial Stress on Fetal Growth. Look for papers and presentations in 2016 as results become available.

Further, our Center’s translational research accomplishments ranged from organizing a call to action by reproductive health professionals from around the world (see FIGO description), to making over fifty presentations to clinicians, policy makers and the public, to initiating the very first farmers’ market at Travis Air Force Base. PRHE’s Dr. Preston Maring, working with the Pacific Coast Farmers’ Market Association, brought fresh fruits and vegetables to an important and underserved population – military personnel and their families. We plan on building on all of these achievements in the coming year to bring environmental health into the mainstream in healthcare and to build public policies to prevent exposure to toxic chemicals.
Going Global: International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics

In 2015, reproductive health professional societies in the U.S. and around the globe declared exposures to toxic chemicals to be their issue and announced a call to action to prevent harm from environmental chemicals.

PRHE led the collaboration that authored the “International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics [FIGO] opinion on reproductive health impacts of exposure to toxic environmental chemicals.” FIGO, which represents Ob/Gyns from 125 countries/territories, proposes physicians, midwives, and other reproductive health professionals advocate for policies to prevent exposure to toxic environmental chemicals; work to ensure a healthy food system for all; make environmental health part of health care; and, champion environmental justice.

PRHE also organized the Summit on Shaping Our Planetary Legacy, held in conjunction with the FIGO World Congress in Vancouver, British Columbia, which brought together over 50 reproductive health leaders from twenty-two countries. They developed a plan for implementing the FIGO opinion’s four recommendations. You can read about the Summit and other FIGO-related events at: http://bit.ly/healthnottoxins
We are drowning our world in untested and unsafe chemicals and the price we are paying in terms of our reproductive health is of serious concern.

Gian Carlo Di Renzo, MD, PhD, Honorary Secretary of the International Federation of Gynecology and Obstetrics (FIGO) upon the release of the FIGO Opinion on toxic chemicals.
In 2015, PRHE researchers, in collaboration with scientists and physicians in the U.S. and abroad, published six scientific articles on a breadth of science, policy and prevention topics.

To highlight some of our findings:

- We documented how public policy to prevent air pollution can lead to reductions in both pregnancy complications and low birth weight;
- We issued a global call to action by reproductive health professionals to prevent exposure to toxic chemicals;
- We refuted the chemical industry’s attacks on the UNEP/WHO report “State of the Science of Endocrine Disrupting Chemicals 2012;”
- We showed that differences in the use of a consumer product can help explain why exposure to one environmental chemical is higher among black women in the U.S.; and
- We found that €157 billion (median cost) per year represents only the tip of the iceberg of the true burden of environmental chemicals in the EU.

A complete list of our publications is at: http://bit.ly/1RFo5Ym
While chemicals have saturated air, food, and water supplies around the world, exposures and health burdens disproportionately affect poor people.

Linda Giudice, MD, PhD, MSc
American Society for Reproductive Medicine, past president UCSF Department of Obstetrics and Gynecology, chair

What FIGO is saying is that physicians ...need to advocate [FOR] policies that will protect our patients and communities from the dangers of involuntary exposure to toxic chemicals.

Jeanne A. Conry, MD, PhD
past president American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists
We completed three case studies evaluating the evidence on: 1) triclosan and developmental health; 2) air pollution and Autism Spectrum Disorder; and, 3) polybrominated diphenyl ethers (PBDEs) and IQ and ADHD. Combined with our two case studies in 2014, we have demonstrated that systematic reviews in environmental health are doable and that they provide more robust evidence about chemical toxicity in comparison to traditional, expert-based narrative reviews.

Moreover, the JPB Foundation has awarded us with a grant to initiate our sixth case study to synthesize the evidence linking formaldehyde exposure and asthma. For the first time we will also summarize evidence of monetary benefits to the public in reducing asthma outcomes. This will put into perspective the benefits that can be gained from taking action to reduce chemical exposures in the environment through effective policy.
The human evidence takes years and requires that people get sick. We should not have to use the public as guinea pigs.” You can read the article here: [http://bit.ly/NYTimesPRHE](http://bit.ly/NYTimesPRHE)

FIGO’s statements on the global challenge of environmental chemicals was broadcast in over fifty news outlets, including but not limited to newspapers, radio interviews, and blogs, in the U.K, U.S., Canada, France, Africa, Asia, and Japan. Mother Jones, Huffington Post, Health Affairs, Le Monde, Fox News, and Medpage Today’s “The Gupta Guide” all ran articles about the FIGO opinion, thanks to the work of the Public Interest Media Group (PiMG), in collaboration with Women in Europe for a Common Future (WECF) and the Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL). And, for the first time PRHE’s standing hashtag, #HealthNotToxics, went viral. All documents related to the FIGO opinion are available at our website: [http://bit.ly/healthnottoxins](http://bit.ly/healthnottoxins)

Broadcasting the Science Far and Wide

Our work was broadcast around the world. Highlights include:

Nicholas Kristof of the New York Times devoted a column to why it matters that doctors internationally are talking about environmental chemicals. It includes a quote from Dr. Woodruff: “It’s frustrating to see the same story over and over. Animal studies, in vitro tests, or early human studies show that chemical A causes adverse effects. The chemical industry says, ‘Those are bad studies, show me the human evidence.’
The PRHE team left FIGO World Congress inspired and encouraged by the preliminary plan of action drafted at the Summit on Shaping Our Planetary Legacy pre-Congress workshop. We have also recently posted Dr. Linda Giudice’s plenary lecture at the FIGO World Congress online. It can be viewed at: http://bit.ly/1OlAMCn

You can view a short video related to the FIGO Opinion and Summit here: http://bit.ly/TalkingToxics

The FIGO symposium on Reproductive Health and the Environment is also online and can be viewed here: http://bit.ly/1kTr424

Reach the Decision Makers Fellowship

PRHE’s Reach the Decision Makers Fellowship program is in its sixth year with a new class of twenty-two fellows. We have now trained a total of 128 community leaders, scientists, physicians, and public health professionals from across the U.S. on how to engage the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (U.S. EPA) in effectively promoting health-protective, science-based standards and public policies. For example, in 2015, Reach fellows were part of a large coalition of scientists and advocates who participated in U.S. EPA’s decision-making on the Agricultural Worker Protection Standard, a regulation that has now been finalized and will strengthen workplace protections related to toxic chemicals for a highly vulnerable population. ☺️
OUR GRATITUDE

Thank you to all of our supporters and colleagues. We are deeply grateful to our funders who made all of 2015’s accomplishments possible, as well as to our dedicated staff:

- Autism Speaks
- Barbara & Donald Jonas Family Fund
- California Environmental Protection Agency
- California Breast Cancer Research Program
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- Forsythia Foundation
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- Kresge Foundation
- Marilsa Foundation
- National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences
- New York Community Trust
- Passport Foundation
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I’m so impressed with what’s going on…the depth of the meeting was mind-boggling…to see an academic center cover the whole breadth of it, and how it impacts clinical practice.

That’s what a member of our External Advisory Committee (EAC) for our Children’s Environmental Health Center said at our meeting in January 2015.
The Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment is dedicated to healthy pregnancies and children by advancing research, clinical care, and public policies that prevent harmful chemical exposures.