

TUESDAY, OCTOBER 28, 2008 KEYNOTE SPEAKER

*In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child
Development Project*

Addressing Toxic Chemical Influences on Developmental Disabilities

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Ted Schettler MD, MPH is Science Director of the Science and Environmental Health Network. (www.sehn.org) He has a medical degree from Case Western Reserve University, a masters in public health from Harvard University, and practiced medicine in New England for over 30 years . Dr. Schettler is co-author of Generations at Risk: Reproductive Health and the Environment and In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development (see <http://psr.igc.org>). He has published a number of articles on related topics in peer-reviewed journals and has served on advisory committees of the US EPA and National Academy of Sciences.

Learning, behavioral and developmental disabilities including Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and autism prevent our children from reaching their full human potential. Seventeen percent of children in the United States have been diagnosed with one or more developmental disabilities. These disorders have widespread societal implications, from health and education costs to the repercussions of criminal behavior. Though trends are difficult to establish with certainty, there is a growing consensus that learning and behavioral disorders are increasing in frequency.

These disabilities are clearly the result of complex interactions among genetic, environmental, and social factors that impact children during vulnerable periods of development. Research demonstrates that pervasive toxic substances, such as mercury, lead, PCBs, dioxins, pesticides, solvents, and others, can contribute to neurobehavioral and cognitive disorders. Human exposure to neurotoxic substances is widespread. A review of the top twenty chemicals reported released under the 2000 Toxics Release Inventory reveals that nearly half are known or suspected neurotoxicants. Over 2 billion pounds of these neurotoxic chemicals were released on-site by facilities into the air, land or water. As our knowledge about these neurotoxic chemicals has increased, the "safe" threshold of exposure has been continuously revised downward. Toxic exposures deserve special scrutiny because they are preventable causes of harm.

In 1998 GBPSR launched the *project In Harm's Way: Toxic Threats to Child Development* to address this important issue.

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