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News Release

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Report available at: www.psr.org

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TOXIC CHEMICALS FOUND IN CONNECTICUT HEALTH CARE PROVIDERS

New Biomonitoring Study Detects Four Chemicals from EPA's Recently Announced Top Priority List

Hartford, CT, October 8th, 2009 – A new report has found toxic chemicals associated with everyday products and health care in the bodies of 20 doctors and nurses from around the country. Physician Carrie Redlich, MD, MPH of Yale University School of Medicine and nurse Timothy Squires RN-BC, MS of Midstate Medical Center in Meriden both volunteered to participate in this unique project, donating blood and urine samples for independent laboratory analysis. Each participant had at least 24 individual chemicals present, four of which are on the recently released Environmental Protection Agency list of priority chemicals for regulation. These chemicals are all associated with chronic illness and physical disorders.

“Health care professionals are coming together and asking if smarter chemical regulations can help reduce the prevalence of disease,” said Anne Hulick, RN, MS, JD, environmental health coordinator for the Connecticut Nurses' Association. “Nurses and doctors took part in this study because they believe it is their responsibility to better understand how chemicals impact human health.”

Other findings include:

- Eighteen chemicals were detected in every single participant
- All twenty participants had at least five of the six major types of chemicals tested
- Thirteen participants tested positive for all six of these major chemical types
- All participants had bisphenol A, phthalates, PBDEs and PFCs, which are priority chemicals for regulation by the FDA and associated with chronic illness such as cancer and endocrine malfunction

Twelve doctors and eight nurses, two in each of 10 states - Alaska, California, Connecticut, Maine, Massachusetts, Michigan, Minnesota, New York, Oregon, and Washington - were tested for the presence of six major chemical types used in the health care setting that are associated with health problems and are pervasive in our environment.

The Hazardous Chemicals in Health Care report offers preliminary indicators of what the broader health care community may be experiencing. The project tested for 62 distinct chemicals in six categories: bisphenol A, mercury, perfluorinated compounds, phthalates, polybrominated diphenyl ethers, and triclosan. The chemicals tested in the investigation are used in products common to the health care setting, from baby bottles, hand sanitizer, and medical gauges, to industrial paints, IV bags and tubes and stain-resistant clothing.

Project participant **Dr. Carrie Redlich**, acting director of the Occupational and Environmental Medicine Program at Yale University School of Medicine says, "It was unsettling to realize how many different chemicals were circulating in my body, but also empowering to collaborate with other health care professionals from around the country in an effort designed to raise awareness about the problem of hazardous environmental exposures. Hopefully our state and federal legislators and policy makers will take notice of the importance of regulations of toxic and workplace chemicals and the role that limiting such exposures can have in disease prevention."

The Centers for Disease Control National Biomonitoring Project has found synthetic chemicals linked to health problems are present in every American. Overall, PSR's test results were consistent with the findings by the CDC, with the exception of a specific type of toxic chemical, dimethyl phthalate, which was found at levels above the CDC's 95th percentile. Future biomonitoring may illuminate a work source of exposure to dimethyl phthalate, which is used in insecticides, hair spray and other personal care items, rocket fuel and more.

"As a registered nurse, I recognize the impact biohazards such as the chemicals being tested in this project can have on the health of individuals and communities," said **Timothy Squires RN-BC, MS**, who works as a Clinical Professional Development Consultant at the MidState Medical Center. "As our nation experiences a growing epidemic of chronic health problems, some of which have clear links to chemicals in our environment, reducing exposure is an important primary prevention measure."

The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut has joined Physicians for Social Responsibility, the American Nurses' Association, and Health Care Without Harm, and other non-profits around the country in developing and publicizing this new report. All of our organizations have joined the Safer Chemicals, Healthy Families campaign, a diverse and growing coalition of organizations, businesses and individuals united by concern about the toxic chemicals in our homes, places of work and in products used every day.

"Together we are calling for reform of the federal law governing toxic chemicals, the Toxic Substance Control Act (TSCA), which we believe should eliminate the most dangerous chemicals from commerce, hold chemical companies responsible for information about health and environmental impacts of chemicals, and use the best science to protect all people and vulnerable groups, including children," said **Sarah Uhl**, who works for Clean Water Action to coordinate the Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut.

The report can be found at www.psr.org. In addition to data on testing, the report includes recommendations on how health care professionals can protect their patients and themselves by avoiding the use of toxic chemicals.

The Coalition for a Safe & Healthy Connecticut (CSHC) is a growing statewide alliance over 50 Connecticut non-profits, as well as thousands of citizens, workers, educators and health professionals working to prevent harm to our health from toxic hazards. CSHC is leading statewide and local campaigns to reduce and eliminate toxic chemical exposures in our everyday lives – in buildings, schools and workplaces, air, water and food, and in consumer products. Our goal is to replace hazardous toxic substances with proven, safer alternatives.

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