

Managing Editor's Desk

Nelson Fabian, M.S.



Years ago, I had a discussion with a NEHA member who was telling me about some association that he belonged to that represented the interests of small airplane owners and pilots. I'll never forget his point. He explained that he religiously paid his membership dues but *not* for any tangible association benefit. Rather, he strongly felt he needed to support his association because his association was looking out for the best interests of those who owned and/or flew small planes. As he put it to me, "So long as I know that they are representing my interests, I'll support them because without their work, those of us who fly small planes would have no one working on our behalf and our love for what we do."

Though this conversation took place years ago, I have never forgotten it. It hits at the heart of our deepest commitment to our members and quite frankly, our entire environmental health community. NEHA needs to represent your interests and do whatever we can within the powers and influence we have, to build a better world for both our people and our cause. And, I dare say, you need us to do that. Your job is to do your work. Our job is to make sure that in future years, you can get your work done in ways that bring great fulfillment to you and to the many people whom you serve.

As our immediate past president Dick Pantages so often wrote, a lot of good things are happening in NEHA these days. Some of those "good things" involve some of the position taking that NEHA has been energetically conducting. When we take positions and give voice to issues that we are concerned about, we honor that deep commitment that we have to our members to work for a better system,

Representing Your Best Interests!

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greater support for our work, greater opportunities for our people, and more power for our cause. To give you some idea as to how much position taking we've been involved in, I will spend the remainder of my column summarizing how active we've been over just this past year in representing the interests of those whom NEHA serves.

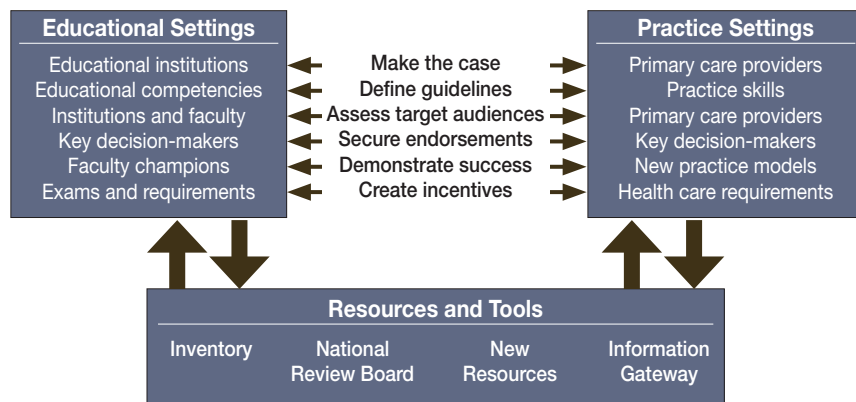
- NEHA took a position on imported food;
- took a position on global climate change;
- took a position in support of tobacco control legislation;
- developed and adopted an original position on the sale and distribution of raw milk;
- joined a sign-on letter in support of the Pew Trust for America's Health "Vision for a Healthier America";

- took a position of support for "One Health," which represents an effort to more holistically see human and animal health as a combined issue;
- took a position in support of Healthiest Nation's Alliance;
- developed and submitted a position on the much-heralded George Washington University Report "Agenda for Strengthening State and Local Roles in the Nation's Food Safety System";
- took a strong position on the draft of the first set of public health accreditation standards;
- developed a policy statement for members to use that expresses NEHA's concern for environmental health in the face of budget cutbacks taking place at the state and local levels of government;
- took a policy position to waive the dues of members who have become unemployed;
- took the position to develop a special fund to help support the membership of environmental health practitioners from third-world countries;
- is currently developing a position on third-party auditors for food protection;
- joined a letter to support H.R. 1381, which calls for an increased federal commitment for prioritizing prevention;
- joined a sign-on letter that urged that public health and prevention become an essential element to health care reform;
- joined a sign-on letter to support the *Climate Change Health Protection and Promotion Act*;
- joined a sign-on letter to support increased funding for the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC);

continued on page 65

FIGURE 1

The Implementation Plan



The plan's first component targets a provider's formal professional education, such as medical or nursing school; the second component targets the practice setting in which a provider works and participates in professional development; and the third component creates linkages to resources and tools needed by providers to deal effectively with pesticide-related health conditions in their practices and communities.

MCN is the largest clinical network for the mobile underserved, providing a unique position from which to promote change across a wide range of practice settings. MCN's project works directly with the health care community to improve pesticide education and awareness and to train frontline health care providers to recognize and treat pesticide-related health conditions.

MCN partners with a variety of migrant and community health centers to facilitate the inte-

gration of environmental medicine into primary care by tailoring the approach to each clinic based on each center's needs and design. Methods include the addition of screening questions to capture environmental occupational exposures, the incorporation of environmental occupational education and outreach, on-site training of clinicians, distribution of resources, linkages to occupational and environmental medicine specialists, and ongoing technical assistance. The strength of the program is dem-

onstrated by its ability to fit successfully into different types and sizes of practice settings.

The availability of resources to guide health care providers in managing pesticide poisonings is a critical aspect of the initiative. The fifth edition of U.S. EPA's *Recognition and Management of Pesticide Poisonings* manual is an internationally used resource to aid clinicians in identifying and properly treating patients with suspected pesticide-related illnesses. The manual provides detailed information on the toxicology of commonly used pesticides by pesticide class, and provides recommendations for treatment based on a consensus of experts on the best clinical management. Since the last publication in 1999, new pesticide types have become available to consumers. This, along with trends in pesticide poisonings, warranted an update to the manual's content, including the consensus treatment strategies. U.S. EPA has entered into a cooperative agreement with the Medical University of South Carolina to develop and publish a new edition of the manual. The new manual will include a new chapter dedicated to pyrethroids, and will include more discussion of chronic health effects associated with long-term exposure to pesticides.

As the second phase of the *National Strategies for Health Care Providers: Pesticides Initiative* draws to a close in 2010, U.S. EPA is preparing for the third phase of the project, which will build on the foundations of current activities. For more information, visit the U.S. EPA Health Care Initiative Web page and resource link at www.epa.gov/oppfead1/safety/healthcare/healthcare.htm. 🐞

Managing Editor's Desk

continued from page 70

- joined a sign-on letter directed at House and Senate appropriations that urged additional funding for federal biomonitoring and health tracking programs;
- joined a sign-on letter calling for increased appropriations for climate change and health in the 2010 budget;
- wrote a letter to the University of Northern Iowa that supported keeping an environmental health certificate and an environmental health emphasis in the School of Health, Physical Education, and Leisure Services program;
- supported *Public Health Preparedness Workforce Development Act of 2007*; and
- supported *Coordinated Environmental Public Health Network Act of 2007*.

NEHA has been involved in what seems like a "bazillion" different activities over these past twelve months—even as we have struggled to maintain our financial health in the midst of this recessionary storm. When we invest time in policy issues, we get no return on our investment. Yet, because we take so seriously the commitment we have to work for a better future for environmental health and the people who practice it, we continue to devote substantial time (and money) to studying issues and taking positions on them. By doing so, we seek to represent your interests as no other organization can.

We also hope that, like the airplane pilot I told you about, we earn your support and make your NEHA membership the extra special investment in your future that we want it to be. 🐞

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