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## LETTER FROM THE PRESIDENT

Happy New Year to all ISEE members!

In planning the Council's and the Society's actions for 2017 one feels sometimes overwhelmed by all that we have to do, but also enthusiasm and motivation. Recent political developments will put extra pressure and uncertainty concerning the future of the environment and repercussions on health globally.

Soon we will circulate a very advanced version of the strategic plan of ISEE and will request input from all our members through our blog. We have identified key priorities including **finance, membership, communication, policy, education** and corresponding objectives and key actions. As in all strategic plans part of the value is on the process rather than the end result. We feel in the Council that this has helped us to clarify our priorities.

For the first time we can discuss a budget plan to finance our actions. The change is a result of the negotiations with the publisher of Epidemiology and we are currently in a situation where we can support the implementation of educational activities, e.g. webinars, launch a new website and contact our members and the wider community through a more systematic and modern approach, and also finance specific actions to promote membership in underrepresented areas in our society.

In this last period we have had a continuous production of commentaries in the ISEE pages of Epidemiology. We look forward to continuing our close collaboration with Epidemiology, the new journal to be launched (Environmental Epidemiology) and also our long-term partnership with EHP.

Finally, this year we will have our 29th congress in [Sydney](#) and we are looking forward to reinforcing our presence outside of North America and Europe. In 2018 we will have a joint conference with ISES in Ottawa, Canada, and we are sure that this will reinforce our links with our colleagues in ISES.

If I was to give one single final message: we will have to learn how to become more efficient in promoting environmental health research and action, now more than ever.

All the best wishes for a successful and peaceful 2017



Manolis Kogevinas  
President ISEE



## ISEE STRATEGIC PLAN FOR THE PERIOD OF 2016-2020

The Strategic Plan Committee and the Executive Committee have been working on the Strategic Plan for the period of 2016-2020. This has entered its final phase: after an evaluation of the current situation and the definition of strategic goals we are now developing a road map to achieve the goals. Our renewed mission is to foster epidemiological studies on the effects of environmental exposures in people, stimulate communication between health professionals, promote methodological advances, and strengthen environmental health policy. We are currently finalizing the Strategic Plan document that describes the whole process, strategic priorities and priority actions related to these priorities. We will share the Strategic Plan document with you soon and give you the possibility to send us your feedback. Note that one of the key components of this plan will be to upgrade our online profile which will include a new website and online educational offerings.

## MEET YOUR NEW ISEE EXECUTIVE COUNCIL MEMBERS

The New Year brings four new members to ISEE's Executive Council. **Beate Ritz** is the President Elect and will become president in January 2018. **Sara Adar** is the new Secretary-Treasurer. **Ana Maria Mora** is the new councilor for Latin and Central America and **Jonathan Chevrier** is the new Councilor for North America. These new Executive Council members are committed to advancing the mission and impact of ISEE. This includes supporting new efforts to increase educational opportunities for all members, expanding and strengthening international collaborations, and promoting the use of environmental epidemiology in policy. Each new council member was asked a series of questions to introduce them to the Society.



### **Beate Ritz, University of California-Los Angeles, USA**

Dr. Ritz started working in the field of occupational and environmental health for nearly four decades. She first trained in this field as a medical student in Germany and then later at UCLA where she was eventually hired by UCLA's Center for Occupational and Environmental Health (COEH) as their Environmental and Occupational Epidemiologist.

While best known for her work on air pollution, Dr Ritz is also a co-investigator in an NICHD-funded Human Placenta Project. She also researches pesticide neurotoxicity as it contributes to neurodegeneration and just recently published a summary of Parkinson's disease and pesticide research "[Of Pesticides and Men: A California Story of Genes and Environment in Parkinson's Disease](#)". The next big study she envisions is to examine whether pesticides dysregulate the microbiome since Parkinson's disease might start in the gut parasympathetic nervous system.

She first attended the annual ISEE conference in 1990 (San Francisco) while she was a doctoral student at UCLA and shortly after my first son was born. She recalls how she had to miss several conferences due to a lack of travel funds for students, as well as balancing her family commitments. This has made her acutely aware of how important it is to support young colleagues. She sees the need to offer both travel fellowships and childcare during our meetings, and more continuous low cost educational and mentoring opportunities within our society.

When asked what she would do if she wasn't an environmental epidemiologist, Dr Ritz says she would have continued to work as a psychologist or neurologist, in which she trained. But if she had to choose another profession as exciting as environmental epidemiology, it would probably be more likely in the arts. She does this now, to a certain degree, when she helps her husband who is a puppet filmmaker.





**Sara Adar, University of Michigan School of Public Health, Anna Arbor, USA**

Dr. Adar has been studying the health effects of environmental exposures for nearly 20 years. She first became interested in this topic by an undergraduate toxicology course that she took at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. She went on to receive a masters of health sciences from the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, a doctorate of science from the Harvard T.H. Chan School of Public Health, and post-doctoral training at the University of Washington School of Public Health.

To date, her research has primarily focused on the health impacts of outdoor air pollution and noise in communities. In fact, she attended her first ISEE Conference in 1998 to present research on spatial differences in traffic-related air pollutants. Interestingly, Sara tells us that she is still conducting research on motor vehicles and is especially proud of her recent paper that examines the health and exposure impacts of adopting clean fuels and technologies on diesel-powered school buses (Adar et al 2015). Other ongoing research areas for Sara include studying the effectiveness of interventions to reduce exposures to air pollutants and improve health, examining the health impacts of long-term exposures to noise, and investigating the interplay of air pollution, the microbiome, and health. Sara says that she is honored to be elected Secretary/Treasurer of ISEE and hopes to contribute positively to this society, which has felt like a professional home to her for many years.



**Ana Maria Mora, Universidad Nacional, Costa Rica**

Dr. Mora is an Associate Professor at the Central American Institute for Studies on Toxic Substances (IRET) at the Universidad Nacional in Costa Rica, and a Postdoctoral Fellow at the Department of Environmental Health at Boston University School of Public Health. Her research focuses primarily on the health effects of exposures to environmental toxicants (e.g., pesticides, heavy metals, and per-and polyfluoroalkyl substances) in vulnerable populations, including pregnant women, children, and low-income/underserved communities. She completed her medical doctor degree from University of Costa Rica in 2005 and my PhD degree in Epidemiology from UC Berkeley School of Public Health in 2014. She has been

working in environmental epidemiology for about 11 years. The first ISEE meeting that she attended was in 2007 (Mexico City). During this meeting, she attended a panel organized by the ISEE Student and New Researchers Network (SNRN) and was so impressed by the work they were doing that she volunteered to be a part of the SNRN Steering Committee the following year. She continued to be a part of the SNRN Committee until 2014, when she became the Chair of the newly established Latin American and the Caribbean (LAC) Chapter of ISEE.



**Jonathan Chevrier, McGill University, Canada**

Dr. Chevrier began studying environmental epidemiology nearly 18 years ago as a masters student. He is currently directing a birth cohort study that aims to investigate whether exposure to insecticides used to control malaria as part of Indoor Residual Spraying (IRS) programs is associated with altered immune function including inhibited response to vaccines. IRS is conducted at least 53 countries, subjecting more than 100 million people to elevated insecticide exposure. Moreover, infectious diseases account for large shares of the morbidity and mortality burdens in areas where IRS is

conducted. His current research is inspired by the work conducted by Philippe Grandjean and Carsten Heilmann et al. on environmental exposures and vaccine response, as well as Brenda Eskenazi's work on the CHAMACOS.



The first ISEE conference he attended was in 2007 (Mexico City). He has come to every ISEE conference since then except for the one in Seoul. He feels that ISEE has given him a lot and that joining the executive council will be a good opportunity to give back to our community of incredibly talented, creative and engaged scientists. In a world in which climate change skepticism still has much sway, he is particularly interested in helping our Society communicate to policy-makers our concerns regarding the substantial disease burden caused by environmental factors. He would also like to see our Society continue to expand beyond its successful annual conference, and expand its reach in low- and middle-income countries where the environmental burden of disease is likely to be staggering. When asked what he would be doing if he wasn't an epidemiologist, he thinks he'd be a physician working for Médecins Sans Frontières.

## CHANGE IN EPIDEMIOLOGY DELIVERY METHODS

As of January, your membership will only include online access for the journal *Epidemiology*. This change in delivery methods will save the society money, which can be re-invested in the society allowing continuation of discounted membership costs for members from developing countries and students, development of a new website, and new initiatives for communication and education. Click [here](#) for instructions, located under the "Customer Support" heading, regarding how to access your online subscription. If you have any problems, please contact [secretariat@iseepi.org](mailto:secretariat@iseepi.org). Since some members expressed a desire to retain a hard copy of the journal, that option is available for an additional fee of \$84 per year. Click [here](#), enter your user name and password, and follow the payment prompts. You will begin receiving your printed copy approximately two months after your payment is received.

## UPCOMING ANNUAL CONFERENCE IN SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA



The 29th Annual Scientific Conference of the International Society of Environmental Epidemiology will be held in Sydney, Australia, from 24-28 September 2017. The conference website is online and they are currently accepting abstracts, pre-conference workshops, and registration. The overall conference theme is "Healthy places, healthy people- where are the connections?" The intention of this theme is to challenge existing paradigms and entice participants to ask important questions about how different places (e.g. the natural environment, built environment, and social environment) interact with different people (e.g. children, elderly, disadvantaged, and marginalized). This approach should invite participants to discuss issues of environmental justice, and the politics of social change and empowerment. We hope you can all attend this conference and want to remind you of some key dates. The call for symposiums will close February 23, 2017, the call for abstracts will close March 23, 2017, and early bird registration closes June 23, 2017.



## AWARD NOMINATIONS

The ISEE Awards Committee is soliciting nominations by April 29, 2017. There are awards for people at different career stages. For instance, the John Goldsmith Award for Outstanding Contributions to Environmental Epidemiology recognizes senior scientists who serve as models of excellence in research, unwavering promotion of environmental health, and integrity. The Tony McMichael Mid-Term Career Award recognizes a mid-career scientist (more than 5 years past their doctoral degree) who has pursued innovative, independent research in environmental epidemiology. The Rebecca James Baker Award recognizes graduate students and new investigators who are within three years of having completed their degree and are beginning to make contributions to the field. There is also the Research Integrity Award that honors an environmental epidemiologist who has demonstrated exceptional integrity in the face of pressure from special interests, and the Best Environmental Epidemiology Paper Award. Click [here](#) for more information about the awards and instructions to submit nominations.

## ISEE-SPONSORED COMMENTARY IN EPIDEMIOLOGY

Each year, ISEE sponsors timely and thoughtful commentaries which are published in EPIDEMIOLOGY. Recent commentaries from our members have called for

Past commentaries have discussed [global action to eliminate lead poisoning](#), [explored the impacts of the diesel vehicle emissions scandal](#), and [considered the implications for further research](#) after discovering lead in the public water supply in Flint, Michigan. Keep an eye out for more member commentaries in upcoming issues of EPIDEMIOLOGY. And if you have an idea for a commentary you would like to read or write, please contact Greg Wellenius at [gregory\\_wellenius@brown.edu](mailto:gregory_wellenius@brown.edu).

## ISEE RESPONDS TO U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVE'S CONCERN ABOUT NIH SUPPORT OF THE INTERNATIONAL AGENCY FOR CANCER RESEARCH

On September 26, 2016, the U.S. House of Representative's Committee on Oversight and Government Reform requested information regarding the U.S. National Institutes of Health's financial support of the International Agency for Cancer Research ([see letter here](#)). In this letter, the Chairman of this committee notes that IARC's approach to for classifying substances as carcinogenic "appear inconsistent with other scientific research" and "have generated much controversy and alarm". The letter then states that IARC "avoids having to meet the strict scientific standards and government scrutiny afforded to science advisory committees in America," yet is still perceived to be an authoritative body for identifying cancer-causing chemicals whose decisions impact American policy. Shortly after this public letter was sent to Dr. Francis Collins, the President of ISEE responded to these statements (see ISEE's letter [here](#)) In this letter, ISEE President Dr. Manolis Kogevinas, on behalf of the society, supports the process by which IARC approaches their scientific review of evidence regarding the carcinogenic potential of substances. Furthermore, the letter expresses ISEE's strong support for IARC as a leading authority in cancer risk assessment and explains that some of the apparent controversy surrounding IARC's determinations comes from changes in expert opinion as a result of new evidence, as well as misunderstanding of IARC's hazard determination. The letter closes with a reminder that IARC serves an important role in the risk assessment process by providing an independent hazard assessment of substances and does not make policy recommendations.



## REMINDER TO ALL MEMBERS!

Please remember to access and update all requested information in the new online membership system. Click [here](#) to access the member login page.

## DONATIONS WELCOME!

In an effort to strengthen ISEE's mission, please consider an additional donation by clicking [here](#). Examples of how your support helps ISEE include: sponsoring students and new researchers to attend the annual meeting and participate in networking activities; sponsoring scientists from developing countries to attend the annual meeting; providing educational opportunities for members; influencing research for health policy around the world; and building capacity for environmental epidemiology around the world.



