

NMA Council on Medical Legislation & Commission on Environmental Health Report | 2015

August, 2015

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Council on Medical Legislation Members: Drs. Mark Mitchell MD, MPH (CT) (chair) Anthony Ibe, MD (DC), Barbara Nabrit Stevens, MD (FL), Alice Coombs, MD (MA), Niva Lubin-Johnson, MD, (IL),

Responsibilities -- Council on Medical legislation

- **Develop appropriate thrusts for NMA on legislative matters.**
- **Initiate and prepare NMA position papers and resolutions on legislative and regulatory matters for approval by the House of Delegates and the Board of Trustees.**
- **Coordinate positions papers with the NMA sections, Scientific Council, Board of Trustees and Local/State societies.**
- **Prepare testimony on legislative matters for NMA officers.**
- **Address public health issues including but not limited to hypertension, nutrition, cancer, occupation health, environment health, substance abuse and mental health. The council may form subcommittees to address specific matters.**

In 2014, the Commission on Environmental Health was established as a permanent subcommittee of the Council on Medical Legislation, to replace the NMA Environmental Health Task Force.

2015 Highlights

1. **Sustainable Growth Rate**--Advocated for and supported the successful passage of the permanent repeal of the Sustainable Growth Rate (SGR), also known as the “permanent doc fix”. This prevented the substantial decrease in Medicare reimbursement required under previous law, which had to be “fixed” by Congress passing legislation each year.
2. **Nutrition Resolutions**—Proposed two resolutions on nutrition: one on reducing sugary beverage consumption and another on reducing sodium in the food supply. This is being done in preparation of a feasibility determination as to whether we can build NMA’s capacity in the area of nutrition advocacy. We are looking to engage with other NMA physicians who are working in this area.
3. **Commission on Environmental Health**—Continues to be very active. See below

Commission on Environmental Health Members: Drs. Mark Mitchell (Co-chair), Jewel Crawford (Co-chair), Yolanda Whyte (Vice-Chair), Cedric Bright, Millicent Collins, Frances Dunston, Cheryl Holder, Michael LeNoir, Edith Mitchell, Albert Morris, Barbara Nabrit-Stephens, Cynthia Paige, Katrina Rhodes, Myrtis Sullivan, Dyann Waugh, and Leonard Weather. Ken Olden Ph.D., former Director of the National Institutes of Environmental Health Sciences, also joined the Commission in 2014.

2015 Highlights

The focus of Commission on Environmental Health has been to work on federal chemical policy reform and to build NMA's capacity to work on climate and health issues after publication of last year's first ever physician survey on this issue.

1. NMA's Congressional advocacy at the 2014 Colloquium and subsequent letters and Hill visits was key to the defeat of a weak Republican chemical policy reform bill last year and paved the way for passage of a much improved bipartisan House bill and significantly improved Senate bill which is likely to pass soon. This will be the first time in 39 years that this largely ineffective law will be updated in order to protect human health.
2. NMA is working with the White House, US Environmental Protection Agency, ecoAmerica's Climate for Health Project, George Mason University, Natural Resources Defense Council, American Lung Association, Public Health Institute and others to build our capacity and effectiveness in engaging in national and state efforts on climate and health.
 - a. Mr. Martin Hamlette presented NMA data to White House officials and published an article on climate and health that was syndicated in the Washington Informer and several other venues
 - b. Drs. Jewel Crawford, Yolanda Whyte, and Mark Mitchell attended other White House and EPA climate events
3. NMA is building capacity to engage in climate and health activities in the key states of Illinois, Missouri, Florida, California, Ohio, and Virginia
 - a. Dr. Cheryl Holder published articles in the Miami Herald and the Tallahassee Democrat
 - b. Dr. Huldah Blamoville published in the St. Louis American
4. Grants: The Commission on Environmental Health was able to raise \$172,000 in the first half of 2015 to support its activities, including \$22,200 in overhead (general support) for NMA. Funding was received from John Merck Fund (not affiliated with the pharmaceutical company), Passport Foundation, MomentUs/ecoAmerica, and Natural Resources Defense Council.

2015 Activities

Advocacy

1. Dr. Mark Mitchell and Dr. Yolanda Whyte participated in Hill visits to 20 congressional offices Jan-July
2. Mr. Hamlette, Executive Director of NMA, presented at a White House meeting on climate change
3. Dr. Virginia Caine contacted Indiana Sen. Donnelly's staff about chem policy bill
4. Dr. Mitchel and Dr. Jewel Crawford attended White House meetings on climate
5. Dr. Mitchell worked with Safer States and the National Black Caucus of State Legislators to get formaldehyde legislation re-introduced in South Carolina
6. Dr. Yolanda Whyte met with and sent letters to 9 Georgia State Legislators about chemical policy bill
7. Dr. Whyte has been working on county legislation in Georgia to ban the sale of toxic children's products, in conjunction with EcoAction
8. Dr. Mitchell met with EPA environmental justice staff in January 2015 to discuss how chemical policy and climate change effects health.
9. Dr. Mitchell met with White House Council on Environmental Quality officials and with EPA head, Gina McCarthy about chemical policy bills
10. Dr. Mitchell had a phone conference with the White House Council on Environmental Quality on the proposed EPA Ozone Rule.
11. Dr. Mitchell testified on mercury in fish at an HHS hearing on Dietary Guidelines for Americans

Letters

1. Dr. Lawrence Sanders, NMA's 115th President, wrote a letter to Walgreens asking them to reduce toxics in their products
2. Dr. Lawrence Sanders, NMA's 115th President, submitted testimony to FDA regarding mercury in tuna.
3. NMA organized a letter co-signed by NMA, National Black Nurses Association, National Hispanic Medical Association, National Association of Hispanic Nurses, Association of American Indian Physicians, and National Council of Asian Pacific Islander Physicians on chemical policy reform
4. NMA co-signed three other letters to Congress and the White House on chemical policy reform

News Articles

1. An article on the NMA Climate Survey was published in the peer reviewed International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health in November 2014.
<http://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/11/12/12473>
2. Mr. Martin Hamlette wrote an article on climate and energy that was syndicated in the Washington Informer and several other media outlets
3. Dr. Mitchell participated in a press conference on a bill to ban Chlorinated Tris in Connecticut

4. An op-ed on Climate by Dr. Cheryl Holder was published in the Miami Herald on April 23
5. Another op-ed on Climate by Dr. Cheryl Holder was published in the Tallahassee Democrat on May 6
6. A PBS Climate effects show with Dr. Mark Mitchell was taped in Columbia, SC in May. It will be syndicated nationally in August and September 2015.
7. Dr. Mitchell participated in a Radio Show in Berkeley, CA about Supreme Court Ruling on Mercury and other Air Toxics in June

Medical Education

Commission on Environmental Health has continued to provide environmental health education on chemical policy and climate change to NMA members and other health professionals.

1. Commission Co-Chair Dr. Mitchell and Vice-Chair, Dr. Yolanda Whyte presented at the following Regional Conferences:
 - NMA Region I conference in St. Maarten before 40 physicians-May 29-30, 2015
 - NMA Region III conference in Nashville, TN before 25 physicians-June 5-6, 2015
 - NMA Region IV conference in Chicago, IL before 30 attendees-May 1-2, 2015
 - NMA Region VI conference in Newport Beach, CA before 40 physicians-May 29-30, 2015
2. Dr. Mitchell presented to the Mound City Medical Forum in St. Louis, MO before 25 physicians on June 16, 2015
3. Dr. Whyte is scheduled to present on chemical policy and climate at the National Black Nurses Association-Atlanta Chapter luncheon conference on July 31, 2015
4. Dr. Whyte is scheduled to present to the Women's Section of National Medical Association on environmental health, chemical policy, and climate at the 2015 Annual Convention on August 1st
5. Dr. Jewel Crawford, Dr. Whyte and Dr. Mitchell are scheduled to present at a joint Family Medicine and Pediatrics Symposium at the 2015 NMA Annual Convention in Detroit on August 5, 2015.

Action Items

Move the following resolutions for adoption by the NMA House of Delegates

- **Sodium in the U.S. Food Supply**
- **Sugar Sweetened Beverages**