Many health professionals do not see climate change as a priority within their field or practice. Yet according to Steering Committee member Dr. Tom Newman, “Climate change is a looming, enormous public health catastrophe. It’s important that physicians and other clinicians be informed about climate change and have information about what they and their patients can do.” SF Bay Area PSR recognizes the crucial role that health care practitioners and health systems can play in addressing the environmental and public health impacts of climate change. As a chapter, we are making the issue of climate change a priority for our colleagues and our membership, and encouraging health care institutions to adopt sustainability practices under the commitment of the Healthier Hospitals Initiative (HHI).

Dr. Newman is spearheading work with the University of California, San Francisco, to address climate change on a systems level. He is working with the Academic Senate to transition UCSF’s Sustainability Task Force into a full-fledged standing committee. The Academic Senate Sustainability Committee is expected to be approved and launched in September 2013, and will identify ways to integrate material on sustainability and climate change into the medical and nursing school curricula.

Currently functioning as a Task Force, the group passed a resolution that was subsequently unanimously approved by the Academic Senate Coordinating Committee, the School of Pharmacy Faculty Council and the School of Medicine Faculty Council, calling on UCSF to phase-out its purchasing of meat and poultry raised with non-therapeutic antibiotics, and encouraging all UC campuses to do the same. Throughout the coming year, SF Bay Area PSR will work with UCSF’s food services department to implement this resolution, as part of the chapter’s statewide coordination of the Healthy Food in Health Care (HFHC) program (and Co-Executive Director Lucia Sayre co-coordinates HFHC on a national level!). HFHC has supported UCSF and many other hospitals and health systems in California over the past five years to move towards more sustainable food service operations and to reduce the amount of meat they purchase and serve, as both a public health and climate mitigation strategy. The Task Force also passed a resolution calling on the UC system to divest from fossil fuel companies, part of a movement taking place on campuses around the country.

As part of our chapter’s work to maximize the clinical voice on environmental and public health issues related to climate change, Dr. Newman has given multiple Medical and Pediatric Grand Rounds presentations and provided the keynote address at UCSF’s major pediatric continuing medical education course. (To view his most recent Medical Grand Rounds, go to www.sfbaypsr.org and click on “Resources,” then “Materials.”)

SF Bay Area PSR will also be working with the California Department of Public Health (CDPH) this summer to organize and help facilitate two panel presentations for the Public Health Work Group, which is a subgroup of the Climate Action Team (CAT). CAT is a leadership team with representation from 18 state agencies that guides the

“SF Bay Area PSR is committed to supporting a substantial increase in climate change mitigation and adaptation strategies in the health care sector and urging clinicians to raise their voices on this most important public health issue.”

—CO-EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR LUCIA SAYRE

(continued on page 3)
Recent set of meetings hosted by the International Campaign Against Nuclear Weapons (ICAN) in Oslo marked a potential turning point in the global effort to eliminate nuclear weapons. A civil society meeting of several hundred people from around the world followed by a meeting of 130 governments organized by the Norwegian government shifted the focus away from previous rhetoric of “state security” and onto the direct humanitarian consequences of nuclear war. Data presented included the profound global environmental, developmental, and health consequences of even a relatively small, regional nuclear war. As summarized in a recent PSR report “Nuclear Famine: A Billion People at Risk,” which utilizes a scenario of a nuclear exchange between India and Pakistan, the accumulated airborne soot and debris from incinerated cities could cause enough “global cooling” in tandem with reduced sunlight and an associated crash in food production to cause an estimated one billion deaths from famine and malnutrition.

The meeting report states that “The key conclusions from the conference, highlighted by Norway’s Foreign Minister in his closing summary, were that no state or international body could adequately address the humanitarian emergency caused by a nuclear weapon detonation; that nuclear weapons have demonstrated devastating immediate and long-term effects; and that such effects will not be constrained by national borders, and will have regional and global impacts.”

Dr. Robert Gould, President of PSR SF Bay Area and Board member of International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW), who attended the civil society meeting with member Patrice Sutton, said that another exciting outcome of the meeting was the announcement by the government of Mexico that it will host a follow-up meeting to review the progress of the campaign against nuclear weapons, possibly as soon as the end of this year.

Dr. Gould said that the efforts of the international community to keep the humanitarian impacts front and center prepares the ground for a treaty banning nuclear weapons, and confronts the opposition of the U.S. and other large countries who have not eliminated their nuclear weapons arsenals. The P5 countries, which include the U.S., U.K., France, Russia and China, boycotted the government meeting in Oslo, claiming it was a diversion from their step-by-step process of nuclear disarmament. This contention flies in the face of the P5’s continued nuclear weapons programs, such as the estimated $180 billion expenditures on nuclear weapons programs proposed by the Obama Administration for the rest of the decade.

PSR and IPPNW assert that abolishing nuclear weapons is urgent, and that governments are obligated to move more speedily toward abolition. Hopefully, the follow-up meeting in Mexico will provide the other nations with further opportunity to put pressure on the P5 countries toward abolition.

Dr. Gould shared that a highlight of the ICAN meeting was
Oslo Meeting ...
(continued from previous page)

an interview on stage with longtime anti-nuclear activists actor Martin Sheen and Father John Dear, where they each expressed their long-term commitment to nuclear weapons abolition, illustrated by their numerous acts of civil disobedience at the Nevada Test Site and other nuclear weapons facilities. In their remarks, both speakers criticized President Obama’s receipt of the Nobel Peace Prize in light of continued nuclear weapons programs, as well as accelerated drone warfare in the Middle East, South Asia, and Africa.

Dr. Ira Helfand, one of four co-Presidents of IPPNW, vividly depicted the aforementioned global effects of even a small nuclear exchange in his presentations to the ICAN meeting and the subsequent Foreign Minister’s conference, information that has already led the International Red Cross (ICRC) and Red Crescent Society to call for the speedy elimination of nuclear weapons. SF Bay Area PSR is considering using a video of Dr. Helfand’s powerful testimony as the basis of a California campaign to encourage local Red Cross chapters to engage the national Red Cross to speak out in support of the ICRC’s endorsement of the abolition of nuclear weapons, as a way of pushing our government to truly live up to its stated goal of “a world without nuclear weapons.” Please get in touch with us if you’d like to join this important outreach at action@sfbaypsr.org

To view the materials mentioned in this article, go to www.sfbaypsr.org and click on “Resources,” then “Materials.”

Climate Change ...
(continued from page 1)

implementation of California’s multi-pronged climate mitigation and adaptation policies and activities. CAT is chaired by the Secretary of Cal EPA and includes CDPH, the California Air Resources Board (CARB), Energy Commission, Department of Water Resources, and Governor’s Office of Planning and Research, among other agencies and departments. Below CAT are 11 sector-specific “work groups” which develop and implement climate policy objectives. The Public Health Work Group is co-chaired by CDPH and CARB, and meets quarterly with a range of state agency partners, local and regional public health departments and a number of health, environmental and community-based stakeholders. For the panels in June and September, SF Bay Area PSR will organize speakers from various health systems and clinical networks to provide an overview of the climate change mitigation and sustainability work that is going on in the health care sector and how clinicians are participating in these efforts.

Additionally, staff and Steering Committee members will play key roles at this year’s annual CleanMed conference April 24–26 in Boston. President Dr. Robert Gould, Co-Executive Director Lucia Sayre, and Senior Program Associate Sapna Thottathil will serve as moderators, facilitators, and/or speakers on panels related to clinical advocacy and the Healthier Hospitals Initiative, and a pre-conference training on the Food Matters curriculum.

Our work has not gone unnoticed. At the February “Forward on Climate” march and rally in San Francisco, dozens of people approached PSR as we carried our chapter banner. Many people appreciated our participation there and made a point of expressing their thanks for a “white coat” voice and the persistent presence of SF Bay Area PSR on important issues of national security, nuclear proliferation and environmental health.

We are thrilled to share with you the important climate change work our chapter is doing to educate health care professionals, engage health systems, and march alongside our partners in grassroots activism. Our efforts make us a leading voice for health professionals in boldly calling for effective policy on climate change to ensure a healthy future for our planet and all who inhabit it.

To learn more about SF Bay Area PSR’s climate change work, go to www.sfbaypsr.org and click on “What We Do,” then “Climate Change” or contact Lucia Sayre, Co-Executive Director at luciasayre@sbcglobal.net.
What does it mean for physicians and other health providers to be advocates for the community, and how can medical and allied health professional students be trained in this skill? Seeking to answer this question, SF Bay Area PSR and UC Berkeley Extension’s American Medical Student Association (AMSA) chapter hosted a panel discussion entitled “Healthcare Providers as Community Advocates.” The speakers included Drs. Robert Gould and Jeff Ritterman, SF Bay Area PSR President and Vice President, respectively; Kathleen Gillis, FNP; and Ingrid Pampolone, PA-C from Highland Hospital in Alameda. The speakers focused on their own personal experiences, including what drew them to healthcare and how that led them to the social justice work they do today.

Dr. Ritterman opened the panel describing his experiences as a cardiologist in Richmond. He illustrated the connection between the rise in sugar consumption and the myriad of health issues faced by America’s youth, and how this led him to propose the first citywide soda tax in the nation. Dr. Gould spoke about his experience growing up with employer-provided healthcare from his father’s municipal job in NYC, and his later surprise to learn when in medical school that such access to cheap and adequate healthcare was far from the norm in the U.S. He gave a passionate and colorful history of his and PSR’s activism against nuclear proliferation and militarism, including work in the American Public Health Association (APHA) Peace Caucus.

Ms. Gillis spoke about her medical mission experiences to Kenya and Haiti and described her involvement in the formation of a medical disaster response team with other healthcare professionals at Highland Hospital. She also spoke about her time working at a Bay Area RotaCare Clinic in Mountain View, which serves the uninsured. She encouraged the students in attendance to volunteer at RotaCare and especially to serve as Spanish interpreters. Ms. Pampolone described her decision to enter PA school and her commitment to serving the population of Alameda County. She explained the challenges of working in Highland Hospital to provide high-quality medical care in situations where patients do not have homes or money for prescription co-payments.

Those who attended the event included pre-health students, active and retired medical providers and community activists and organizers. There was a strong interest, by all participating, to take part in future events on a range of public health topics. Dr. Henry Abrons, Board President of the California chapter of Physicians for a National Health Program, explained the work of his organization and discussed with student participants the possibility of holding an event contrasting a single payer health care system with the Affordable Care Act. Lucia Sayre, Co-Executive Director of SF Bay Area PSR, gave an overview of the Healthy Food in Health Care Program and invited students and community members to become involved in a broad effort to improve the quality of food in California health care systems.

UC Berkeley Extension’s AMSA chapter is excited by the prospect of partnering with SF Bay Area PSR to offer similar events, as there is no formal course in medical school that will teach us to use our training to advocate for the community. That skill will develop through inspiration from those who came before us, and the knowledge that a healthy, equitable society should be more than a dream but can be a reality.

To get involved in student PSR work, email action@sfbaypsr.org.
Health Care Systems Lead the Way on Sustainability

By Kendra Klein, Senior Program Associate

The Healthy Food in Health Care (HFHC) program continues to gain momentum in California. These efforts are part of a national campaign to harness the purchasing power and expertise of the health care sector to advance the development of a sustainable food system. Through advocacy and education, HFHC coordinators motivate facilities to implement programs that explicitly connect all aspects of the food system with health. We catalyze sustainable procurement efforts, create clinician advocates, and inspire health care institutions to become leaders in shaping a food system that supports prevention-based health care.

We are excited about the hiring of two new regional organizers in Los Angeles and San Diego. Thanks to funding from The California Endowment, we’ve partnered with JuliAnna Arnett of San Diego Community Health Improvement Partners and Patti Oliver, Nutrition Services Director at UCLA Health System, to expand the HFHC program in Southern California. Based on the innovative Bay Area Hospital Leadership Team model, they will network with hospitals in their regions to share best practices and pool purchasing power in order to shift the marketplace toward sustainability. The California Endowment funding will also be used to host HFHC roundtables in each region in 2013 aimed at educating participants about a systems approach to healthy food and inspiring clinician advocates.

The Bay Area Hospital Leadership Team celebrated a number of successes over the past year. Through the coordination of SF Bay Area PSR, three hospitals—UCSF Medical Center, John Muir Health, and the San Francisco VA Medical Center—combined their demand to secure cage-free, humane-certified eggs from Wilcox Farms through their main distributor, US Foods. Wilcox Farms is a fourth generation family farm in Washington state. They are committed to converting their operation to one hundred percent organic and cage-free in response to growing demand as well as the company’s desire to sustain the land, community and company for the future. “The conversion process has been extremely intense, both with financial and management resources,” says co-owner Andy Wilcox, “so when customers like UCSF and John Muir Health choose our products, it validates our decision.”

The Leadership Team has also made great strides on fruits and vegetables through a Regional Produce Purchasing Project coordinated by San Francisco Bay Area PSR and Community Alliance with Family Farmers. Last summer, the same three leading hospitals achieved combined purchasing of 7,210 pounds of local, organic strawberries, 3,830 pounds of local green beans, and 1,440 pounds of local stone fruit, all sourced from family farms practicing environmentally-friendly production methods. Committed to seasonal purchasing, they are currently working on asparagus and greens. Thanks to continued funding from the Kaiser Permanente Community Benefits Program, the program brought on three new hospitals in 2013—San Francisco General Hospital, St. Francis Hospital in San Francisco, and Washington Hospital in Fremont.

Family-scale farms are often shut out of the institutional market, but hospital foodservice leaders are seeking out their high quality and sustainable produce. “The connection has been established and will only strengthen in the growing seasons to come,” said John Muir Health’s Executive Chef, Alison Negrin.

A unique aspect of this program is that it works with hospitals’ current produce distributors to take advantage of existing supply chain infrastructure, such as processing capacity, food safety assurance, and distribution systems. The program embeds greater social and environmental values in the existing supply chain by connecting more local growers with hospitals and increasing the traceability of local food from farm to hospital.

“As a farm, we like to work with area hospitals because it allows us to plan crops specifically suited to their needs and to sustainably expand local sales,” says Christine Coke, co-owner of Coke Farms. As a result of the hospitals’ commitment, Coke Farm plans to double their acreage for organic strawberry production this summer. Prioritizing organic produce means hospitals are supporting agricultural methods that are better for the land, for farm workers, and for hospital patients and visitors.

These efforts are just one part of a larger sustainability agenda of over 400 hospitals nationwide that have signed the Healthy Food in Health Care Pledge developed by Health Care Without Harm which states that healthy food must come from a food system that is economically viable, ecologically sustainable, and socially just.

For more information or how to get involved, go to www.cahealthyfoodinhealthcare.org.
Thanks!

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