

NEEF and Developmental Optometry  
The Environmental History  
Skeffington Symposium  
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The relationship between exposure to environmental toxins in utero and in a child's early years and the development of disabilities ranging from LD, ADD, ADHD, PDD to autism and possibly cancer, is well known. The National Environmental Education Foundation ([www.neefusa.org](http://www.neefusa.org)), a non-profit based in Washington D.C., has developed an excellent history screening tool that will be useful to our optometric colleagues to raise awareness among ourselves and our patient population.<sup>1</sup>

The therapy that we provide to our patients is a part of the healing puzzle. Continual cleansing through a "clean" diet and exercise are equally important components to facilitating healing in our patients.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Children's Environmental Health Faculty Champions Initiative: A Successful Model for Integrating Environmental Health into Pediatric Health Care, Rogers et al, Environmental Health Perspectives, Volume 117, Number 5, May 2009.

<sup>2</sup> *Envisioning A Bright Future* Lemer, P. ed., c2008

Look over the screening environmental history form, the complete Pediatric Environmental History for 0-18 years of Age History form and the Environmental History Form for the Pediatric Asthma patient and consider incorporating one or all of them into your history taking.

The Pediatric Environmental History Initiative is an excellent resource. Check out <http://www.neefusa.org> or call NEEF at 202-833-2933 or e-mail: [health@neefusa.org](mailto:health@neefusa.org)

Some of the questions included in the Screening Environmental History form ask where the child lives and spends most of his or her time, what is the age, location and condition of the living space? Does anyone in the household smoke? Are there furry pets in the house? Is there a carbon monoxide and radon detector? Is the child protected from excessive UV exposure? Is the child exposed to any toxic chemicals the parents are aware of? What is the source of drinking water? Does the child watch TV or use the computer for more than two hours a day? How many times a week does the child have

unstructured free play outside for at least 30 minutes? <sup>3</sup>

The NEEF fact sheet on Children's Health and Nature is outstanding. The National Environmental Education Foundation "has joined the movement to reconnect children with nature." They've "compiled a comprehensive fact sheet highlighting published literature that supports the health benefits of the natural environment." <sup>4</sup> Materials in English and Spanish are available through NEEF.

Perhaps optometry will be next to endorse the Position Statement for Health Professionals and Environmental Health Education put out by NEEF.

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<sup>3</sup> American Academy of Pediatrics Committee on Environmental health. 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. Etzel Ra et al. American Academy of Pediatrics, 2003. Chapter 4. How to Take an Environmental History  
Balk, SJ. The Environmental history: asking the right questions. Contemp Pediatr. 1996;13:19-36  
Frank A. et al. Case Studies in Environmental Medicine. Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry. Atlanta GA rev 2000. Taking an Exposure History.

<sup>4</sup> [www.neefusa.org/health/children\\_nature.htm](http://www.neefusa.org/health/children_nature.htm)