



**Concerned  
Health Professionals of NY**



*Environmental health scientist and acclaimed author Dr. Sandra Steingraber will speak at the HEAL offices in Brussels, 4 June 2014 from 14.30-17.00. For more information please email the HEAL Secretariat at [info@env-health.org](mailto:info@env-health.org)*

## **PRESS RELEASE**

### **US-EU moratorium on fracking is essential to protect public health**

**Brussels, 4 June 2014** – A leading US expert on public health aspects of shale gas mining is extending her call to stop fracking on health grounds to Europe.

Dr. Sandra Steingraber, co-founder of Concerned Health Professionals of New York and science advisor for Americans Against Fracking (1), is in Brussels to bring evidence from the US to share with European health and environment groups and policy makers.

A letter which Dr. Steingraber coordinated last week, signed by over 250 US physicians, health organisations and scientists, summarises major trends in emerging peer-reviewed evidence on the health effects of fracking. (2)

Evidence of harm to health focuses on air pollution, contamination of water supplies, and risks associated with earthquakes, accidents and terrorism. (2, 3)

One of the big concerns in the US appears to be drinking water contamination. Reports from Pennsylvania include more than 160 confirmed cases. The contamination follows the “relatively frequent” cracking, shrinking or crumbling of the casing of drilled wells. Fracking, or hydraulic fracturing, involves injecting chemicals mixed into water, sand or gravel, at high pressure to extract oil and gas from shale rock.

Data from American Lung Association and various studies show air quality in rural areas of the US where fracking is taking place can be worse than air quality in urban areas. (3) Science indicates that the air pollutants from fracking can - and are - having effects on rates of childhood asthma, low birth weight among mothers living near gas drills, stroke and heart attacks. Recently, a Texan family was awarded US\$3 million in damages for the effects of exposure to toxic air emissions.(4)

Dr. Steingraber says that fracking is as bad for health and climate as coal. Companies involved are not required to monitor hazardous air pollutants, “*nor the climate-killing methane that leaks from all parts of the extraction and distribution system,*” she says. (3)

Accidents both at the mining sites and during transport are another worry. Fracked gas that is surplus to requirements in the US may soon be exported to Europe. Legislation currently moving through the US Congress would accelerate the building of Liquefied Natural Gas (LNG) terminals along US coastal cities from which to ship fracked gas. This poses many additional risks for health, security and safety above and beyond those that result from fracking. (5)

Dr. Steingraber says that because of the complex nature and expense of implementing rigorous regulation of the shale gas industry, a moratorium on fracking, as exists in New York, is the only option for Europe.

*“Industry calls for “sensible rules” (6) but this is not an option. First, data show that fracking is NOT safe as currently practised, and NO evidence exists to say that it can be made safe through regulations, and second, because the rules are necessarily so complex, their enforcement is not possible in a budget-constrained world,” she says.*

Dr. Steingraber will draw attention to the threat to public health from fracking in the context of the ongoing US/EU trade talks, which could make it easier for foreign companies to sue countries in the EU that have banned fracking.

The Health and Environment Alliance (HEAL) is also convinced of the need for moratorium on fracking in the US and individual EU countries, and is concerned about the threat from US-EU trade negotiations.

*“It is no longer possible for the fracking industry to claim that there is “No proof of harm” and we’ll continue to campaign for moratoria in European countries,” says Génon K. Jensen, HEAL’s Executive Director.*

*“We’ll also address trade issues because even though some EU countries are not allowing fracking at present, the right to say no to fracking could be wiped out by the investor dispute mechanism clause in the TTIP agreement. The European health community will need to make its voice heard on fracking.”*

### **Sharing with health professionals**

HEAL has an ongoing programme of sharing information on shale gas fracturing with public health experts and health groups working closely with Dr. Steingraber and US and European groups. (7) The aim is to provide European policy makers with evidence from the health sector of harm to health associated with fracking.

A particular concern is that some of the chemicals used appear to endocrine disruptors, which mimic sex hormones, according to a study by the University of Missouri. (3) Ms Jensen says: *“At a time when Europe’s new law on pesticides mandates that EDCs are taken off the market, it does not make sense to introduce them intentionally in fracking fluids and risk further contamination of our water.”*

The *Lancet* medical journal reported recently on a seminar on the public health implications of fracking at the London School of Hygiene and Tropical Medicine. The article called for sharing of data and lessons that have been learned particularly within the US, where more than 52,000 shale gas wells have been drilled. (8)

### **Contacts:**

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### **Notes for journalists**

1. Dr Sandra Steingraber is a PhD biologist and Distinguished Scholar in Residence at Ithaca College in New York State, co-founder of New Yorkers Against Fracking as well as Concerned Health Professionals of New York and science advisor for Americans Against Fracking.

Dr Steingraber is in Brussels as a speaker at Green Week's New Environmentalism Summit, 3 June 2014. See [http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/events/2014/06/03-green-week-conference-2014-circular-economy-saving-resources-creating-jobs\\_en.htm](http://europa.eu/newsroom/calendar/events/2014/06/03-green-week-conference-2014-circular-economy-saving-resources-creating-jobs_en.htm)

2. Letter from Concerned Health Professionals of New York. It calls on New York State Governor Cuomo to establish a formal 3-5 year moratorium on fracking [bit.ly/1kO3jFu](http://bit.ly/1kO3jFu)

3. "Fracking and the Un-hoodwinking of America", transcription of a recent video presentation by Sandra Steingraber (for a copy, email [Diana@env-health.org](mailto:Diana@env-health.org))

4. Texas fracking verdict puts industry on notice about toxic air emissions, <http://www.publicintegrity.org/2014/05/28/14812/texas-fracking-verdict-puts-industry-notice-about-toxic-air-emissions>

5. Fact sheet on LNG, Americans against Fracking: <http://www.americansagainstfracking.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/AAF-LNG-final-primer1.pdf>

6. New York Times, "[The Right Way to Develop Shale Gas](#)" (Op-Ed, April 30)

7. See PR here <http://www.env-health.org/resources/press-releases/article/eu-environmental-assessment-law>

8. Kovats S et al, The health implications of fracking, The Lancet, [Volume 383, Issue 9919](#), Pages 757 - 758, 1 March 2014

*HEAL is a leading European not-for-profit organization addressing how the environment affects health in the European Union. With the support of its more than 65 member organizations, which represent health professionals, not-for-profit health insurers, patients, citizens, women, youth, and environmental experts, HEAL brings independent expertise and evidence from the health community to different decision-making processes. Members include international and Europe-wide organisations as well as national and local groups. Website: [www.env-health.org](http://www.env-health.org) Follow us on [Facebook](#) and Twitter (@HealthandEnv)*

*Concerned Health Professionals of New York is an initiative to amplify the voices of hundreds of health professionals in New York who have been calling on Governor Andrew Cuomo to conduct a comprehensive Health Impact Assessment (HIA) on high-volume horizontal hydraulic fracturing. As health professionals who everyday serve and care for New Yorkers, it is critical that the public health and safety of our communities is taken into consideration before any decision is made on whether or not to lift the current moratorium on fracking in New York. Website: <http://concernedhealthny.org>*