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**Sidelined EPA Scientist wins Inaugural Children’s Environmental Health Award.**

The International Society for Children’s Health and the Environment (ISCHE) is pleased to announce the selection of Ruth Etzel, MD, PhD, as the winner of the inaugural Herbert Needleman Scientist-Advocate Award. ISCHE is a society whose goal is to promote children’s health worldwide by enhancing the quality of their environment.

Dr. Etzel, who is a pediatrician and epidemiologist, served as the Director of Office of Children’s Health Protection at the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency since 2015. For the past 2 years, she led the effort to develop a federal strategy to eliminate childhood lead poisoning. Dr. Etzel was placed on administrative leave in September for reasons the EPA has yet to disclose.

Mark Miller MD, MPH, who is the President of ISCHE, said, “We were shocked to hear that Dr. Etzel was placed on leave. No one is more qualified for her position at EPA. Given these circumstances, we believe it is more important than ever to recognize Dr. Etzel’s work and commitment to protecting children’s health.”

Herbert Needleman, MD, was a pediatrician, child psychiatrist, and scientist whose work brought about a fundamental change in the way we think about lead poisoning and, more generally, the threats that toxic chemicals pose to children’s health. “Dr. Needleman’s work showed that exposure to very small amounts of lead lowered IQ in young children,” said David Bellinger, PhD, MSc, co-chair of the selection committee for the award. “He was fiercely attacked by the lead industry, but eventually prevailed, and his findings were validated by many subsequent studies.

With this award, the Society recognizes Dr. Etzel who has helped make the environment safer for children despite strong opposition. “I am sure that Herb would be pleased that Dr. Etzel is the first recipient of this award.” Neil Leifer, Esq., an advocate for lead poisoned children and co-chair of the selection committee. “Herb recognized that children’s environmental health required both solid and scholarly scientific investigation and strong advocacy for public policy, particularly in the face of industry opposition.”

On learning the news, Dr. Etzel said, “I am honored to have won such an award at this historical moment when children’s health is increasingly at risk. Dr. Needleman was an inspirational mentor to me when I was a young pediatrician in the 1980s.”

The award will be presented to Dr. Etzel at ISCHE’s meeting in Merida, Mexico, in January.

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