

International Polar Year Arctic Human Health Initiative

Sustainable Development Working Group Report

Khanty-Mansiysk

October 10-11, 2005

1. Project Overview:

The Arctic Council has recognized that the International Polar Year (2007-2008) as a unique opportunity to stimulate cooperation and coordination on Arctic Research and to increase the awareness and visibility of the Arctic region. Last November in Reykjavik, the Arctic Council Ministers approved a United States lead Arctic Human Health Initiative for the International Polar Year.

The AHHI core project will seek to advance the joint circumpolar human health research agendas of the Arctic Council SDWG and AMAP human health research activities, as well as those of the International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH). Current AC human health activities include monitoring the human health impact of anthropogenic pollutants, climate variability, infectious diseases, assessment of health and well being of children and youth, and the expansion and assessment of tele-health innovations in Arctic regions. Direction and guidance will be sought from the ACIA, and AHDR reports. The IUCH (www.iuch.org) promotes international cooperation, research, scientific information exchange and education in the areas of Arctic Health Policy, Birth Defects & Genetics, Cancer, Diet & Heart, Environmental Health & Subsistence Food Security, Family Health, Fetal Alcohol Syndrome, Health Surveys, HIV/AIDS, STDs, Indigenous Peoples Health, Infectious Diseases, Injury Prevention, Occupational Safety & Health, Population Based Planning, Tobacco & Health, and Women's Health.

An anticipated outcome of AHHI will be the development of an organizational infrastructure for the coordination of both AMAP and SDWG human health research activities.

A key element of AHHI will be the development of new, and expansion of existing human health surveillance, monitoring and research **networks**. These circumpolar networks will allow the monitoring of diseases of concern in Arctic communities through the development of standardized study protocols, data collection, laboratory methods, and data analysis. Once established these networks will allow the monitoring of disease prevalence over time, the determination of risk factors for disease and evaluation and implementation of disease prevention and control strategies. Networks also provide opportunities for the development of sustainable partnerships between communities and researcher through the establishment of community based monitoring activities.

A focus of AHHI is the establishment of **research activities** focusing on human health issues of concern to Arctic residents. Priority areas include the human health impact of:

- Regional and inter-continentally transported anthropogenic pollution in Arctic regions.
- Contaminants and zoonotic infectious diseases on the traditional food supply.
- Climate variability on human health and traditional food supply.
- Infectious diseases including tuberculosis, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis, vaccine preventable diseases, emerging infectious diseases such as SARS.

- The effects of the changing Arctic environment on the evolution, ecology, and emergence of zoonotic disease, particularly avian influenza.
- Chronic diseases such as cancer, cardiovascular diseases, obesity and diabetes,
- Behavioral health issues, such as suicide, interpersonal violence and substance abuse, and unintentional injuries.

Research activities will include the use of culturally sensitive health interview **surveys** which are a useful tool for characterizing health and risky behaviors, the health status of populations, and the development of culturally appropriate interventions. In addition, several international workshops and symposia are being planned with the goal of fostering new collaboration.

In the area of **health communication** several symposia and topic specific work shops are planned before during and following IPY which will allow the evaluation of advances made in the health of Arctic peoples, the health disparities that remain, and the examination of future risks to the health and well-being of all Arctic residents.

2. Progress to date

An expression of intent (EoI) on behalf of the Arctic Council was submitted to the IPY Joint Committee January 14, 2005, and can be viewed at the IPY Web Site www.ipy.org together with other health related EoIs under cluster #6 Human Issues. The AHHI EoI is JC#914. The official assessment of the AHHI EoI suggested that the AHHI could function as a “core” or umbrella project which would engage other regional national and international partners.

An AHHI International Advisory committee was formed and met in Copenhagen, Denmark April 7, to discuss potential linkages and areas of cooperation between Human Health Activities proposed to be undertaken during IPY by researchers in other circumpolar countries and the development of a full proposal to be submitted to the IPY Joint committee. The committee consisted of representatives from: The Arctic Council’s AMAP human health and SDWG’s, Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Centre for Health Research in Greenland Danish National Institute of Public Health, Danish Greenlandic Circumpolar Health Society, Indigenous Peoples Secretariat, Center of Primary Health Care Nuuk Greenland, Centre for Arctic Medicine, University of Oulu Finland, Institute of Community Medicine University of Tromsø, Norway, Saami National Center for Child and Adolescent Health, Center for Saami Health Research, Lund University Sweden, Russian Academy of Medical Sciences Novosibirsk, Siberia, State Sanitary and Epidemiology Surveillance Center Arkhangelsk Region, Russian Federation, the International Union for Circumpolar Health Alaska Native Tribal health Consortium, Southcentral Foundation, Anchorage Alaska, and the US Centers for Disease Control and Prevention Office of Global Health and Arctic Investigations Program. A detailed summary of the meeting can be found at www.iuch.org/ipy .

A full proposal was submitted to the IPY Joint Committee September 30, 2005, the details of which can be viewed at www.ipy.org

3. Next Steps:

Presentation, discussion of the AHHI concept at the SDWG and SAO's meetings held in Khanty-Mansiysk, Russian Federation October 10-14, 2005.

Design and launch the AHHI website (www.ipy-ahhi.net) by November 1, 2005

Plan and conduct an IPY AHHI International Advisory Committee meeting October 25, 2005, Quebec City, Quebec Canada.

Plan IPY works shops and activities for the 13th International Congress on Circumpolar Health (ICCH), Novosibirsk, Russian Federation, June 12-16, 2006. This meeting will serve as the Gateway to the IPY AHHI. Symposia and IUCH working groups will focus on planned human health activities for IPY. The 14th ICCH to be held in Yellowknife, Canada, in 2009 will consolidate the "IPY human health legacy" and set the future Arctic Human Health research agenda.

4. Leaders and Participants:

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