

**Fact Sheet**  
**Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI)**  
**An Arctic Council Activity Proposed For**  
**International Polar Year**

**Background**

Arctic Council Ministers meeting in Reykjavik, Iceland on November 24, 2004 stated their interest in International Polar Year as follows:

***Recognize** the International Polar Year 2007-2008 as a unique opportunity to stimulate cooperation and coordination on Arctic research and increase awareness and visibility of the Arctic region and **underline** the role of the Arctic Council as a high level intergovernmental forum in providing political support for the IPY in the Arctic and **decide** that the Arctic Council will develop proposals to the IPY Joint Committee,*

The United States agreed to take the lead on developing a proposal to stimulate cooperation and coordination to promote the health and well-being of Arctic residents building on the work underway in the Arctic Council.

**The Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI)**

A letter of intent describing the proposed AHHI was circulated for comment among U.S. and international human health experts. The final version was then submitted to the International Polar Year Joint Committee by the January 14, 2005 deadline and circulated to Arctic Council Senior Officials. A brief summary of the AHHI is provided on page 2.

The Alaska Investigations Program of the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH) hosted a first meeting of the U.S. National Advisory Committee to the AHHI in Anchorage, Alaska on February 8, 2005. Representatives of CDC, NIH's Fogarty International Center, the University of Alaska, Southcentral Foundation, State of Alaska Public Health, Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium, Alaska Native Science Commission, Northern Forum, the Department of State and the IUCH currently make up the Advisory Committee.

The Advisory Committee offered substantive suggestions to the AHHI proposal, agreed to engage in support of the AHHI, and identified next steps, including seeking funding to support U.S. participation.

Members of the U.S. National Advisory Committee will meet with international representatives from IUCH, the human health projects of the Arctic Council, and interested international organizations in Copenhagen, Denmark on April 7-8 to further refine the AHHI concept and prepare to submit a full proposal to the IPY Joint Committee in June, 2005.

### **Proposed International Polar Year Activities**

Proposed activities include: the expansion of the International Circumpolar Surveillance of infectious diseases, non infectious disease conditions, and injuries in Arctic Regions; expansion of tele-medicine and tele-health activities; initiate prospective studies on metabolic aspects of diabetes, coronary heart disease, and obesity; continuation of monitoring activities measuring the effect of anthropogenic pollutants on human health; establishment of activities to monitor the effects of climate change on human health and the incidence of zoonotic diseases. Education, outreach and health communication will be important aspects of the AHHI. The 13<sup>th</sup> International Congress on Circumpolar Health planned for Novosibirsk, Russia June 12-26, 2006 is expected to serve as a “Gateway to the IPY” for the AHHI. The 14<sup>th</sup> Congress in Canada in 2009 will be an occasion to consolidate the legacy of IPY.

### **From the AHHI letter of intent submission to the IPY Joint Committee**

The Arctic Human Health Initiative (AHHI) will advance the joint research agenda of the Arctic Council, an eight-nation intergovernmental forum for sustainable development and environmental protection, in the areas of infectious disease, the effects of anthropogenic pollution, UV radiation, and climate variability on human health, and telehealth innovations. Specifically, the leaders of these research programs will build on their years of circumpolar collaboration to extend the International Circumpolar Surveillance network of hospitals and public health facilities into Russia and include additional infectious diseases of concern, to continue monitoring contaminants in human blood and tissues to reveal temporal and spatial trends and to combine experiences from the rapidly expanding disciplines of biomarker research and molecular epidemiology with these monitoring programs, and to extend circumpolar cooperation on telehealth, particularly to Arctic regions in the Russian Federation. In addition, the AHHI will draw on the outstanding leadership of the Arctic Council member states' national and international research programs in the areas of human genomics, biomarkers, hypothermia, hibernation, mental health, and climate sensitive infectious diseases.

The AHHI steering group, led by the U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, will work with the International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH), the Fogarty International Center of the U.S. National Institutes of Health, and other partners to develop a program of outreach and public education focused on the promotion of good health for Arctic residents and better integration of the findings of Arctic health research. The IUCH will make its triennial Congress in 2006 available to facilitate IPY health activities and its Congress in 2009 to underscore the health legacy of IPY.

**Principal Contact Persons: Dr. Alan Parkinson ( [AJPI@cdc.gov](mailto:AJPI@cdc.gov)) and Neil Murphy, MD ( [NMurphy@SouthcentralFoundation.com](mailto:NMurphy@SouthcentralFoundation.com))**

**February, 2005**