

International Network for Circumpolar Health Research

Third Annual General Meeting 2008

Minutes

Date: 13th May, 2008
Time: 1700-1900
Place: Rica Ishavshotel, Tromsø, Norway

Members In Attendance:

Canada: Kue Young (President), Laura Arbour (Secretary), Pamela Orr, Eric Dewailly, Jody Butler-Walker, Susan Chatwood, Katherine Minich, Amanda Ritchie, Vasiliki Douglas, Gwen Healey

Finland: Juhani Hassi (Vice president), Tiina Mäkinen,

Alaska: Rhonda Johnson, Alan Parkinson,

Denmark: Peter Bjerregaard, Preben Homøe, Anders Koch, Marit Jørgensen

Greenland: Gert Mulvad

Russia: Andrew Kozlov,

Norway: Jon Øyvind Odland

Other Participants:

Chris Fletcher, Jay Van Oostdam [*Canada*]

Arja Rautio [*Finland*]

Birgitta Evengård [*Sweden*]

1. **Welcome and agenda approval:** Members were welcomed to the Third Annual Meeting of the INCHR. Jon Øyvind Odland was thanked for putting together an excellent conference for the INCHR members and other interested participants. Those who were not INCHR members were encouraged to become members by signing up, sending a photo and a biography for the website.
2. **Approval of previous minutes:** The minutes of the Second Annual Meeting of the INCHR held in April 2007 in Banff, Alberta, Canada were reviewed and approved (motion by Peter Bjerregaard).
3. **Review of activities:**
 - a) KueYoung reported on the recipients for the 2007/08 INCHR travel award.
 - *Member category:* Susan Chatwood from Yellowknife, Canada, will travel to Tromsø Norway, to be hosted by on Jon Øyvind Odland at the University of Tromsø.
 - *Trainee Category:* Amanda Clarke, Master of Health Sciences student, University of Toronto, will travel to Anchorage, USA, to be hosted by Rhonda

Johnson, University of Alaska Anchorage. [Note added: Ms Clarke has changed her plans and will decline the award – an additional award will be made for the 2008/09 competition]

There was discussion of the importance of raising the profile of the award, especially internationally in that the only applicants were Canadian in the first competition.

The next deadline is October 2008, the winners to be announced by January 2009.

In the event where no suitable candidates are selected in October, a second competition in the spring of 2009 will be held.

- b) Juhani Hassi, editor-in-chief of the International Journal of Circumpolar Health updated the status of the journal. INCHR is one of several publishers of this journal. The editorial office is working to improve the impact factor of the journal. A new series called “Circumpolar Health Supplements” has been launched, covering special topics and also longer monographs/reports. Most of the IJCH articles will remain researcher-initiated submissions with peer review.

Three Circumpolar Health Supplements have been published to date: *Indigenous Peoples of Northern Russia: Anthropology and Health* (Andrew Kozlov et al.) *Dietary Transition and Contaminants in the Arctic: Emphasis on Greenland* (Jens Hansen et al) and *Circumpolar Health Indicators: Sources, Data and Maps* (Young K).

Members are encouraged to consider publishing a Circumpolar Health Supplement. The journal will recover part or all of the publishing costs through an agreement with the author [usually between €10,000 and €30,000].

- c) Kue Young reported that the new book, entitled *Health Transitions in Arctic Populations* edited by Kue Young and Peter Bjerregaard will be launched at the hotel following the INCHR annual meeting. Two copies of this book were available for preview at this meeting, and it would soon be available for sale through the University of Toronto Press. He reminded those attending that order forms were distributed in the conference package. The book is a good example of the collaborative effort of members of the INCHR and non-members.
- d) Kue Young reported that the website of the INCHR (<http://www.inchr.org>), currently housed at the University of Toronto, will be moved to the server that currently hosts the IJCH and the IUCH. After the move, members are encouraged to update their biographical information. Currently only the home page has been translated into Russian. Members were encouraged to consider ways to expand and improve the website.

4) Future activities:

- a) Juhani Hassi reported on the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. He provided a historical account of the working group. Currently there are a number of health projects where members of the INCHR are involved. In particular is Alan Parkinson's role as lead in the Arctic Human Health Initiative and International Circumpolar Surveillance. A meeting is planned in Oslo following the Tromsø meeting where a draft document will be presented to establish a human health expert advisory group.
- b) Gert Mulvad and Arja Rautio reported on a new online course on circumpolar health and wellbeing that will be offered through the Centre for Arctic Medicine of the University of Oulu in collaboration with the University of the Arctic. The course will provide 6 credits, and will be presented over 13 weeks. Gert suggested that there should be more integration of current health research into the course. He suggested that lectures and presentations by members of INCHR can potentially be incorporated as part of the course. The University of Oulu has also launched a new Master's in Circumpolar Health with 12 students enrolled for the first time. Both Gert and Arja were congratulated for their innovativeness in promoting distance education for students in the Arctic. Other online courses and distance education were also mentioned, such the MPH offered by the University of Alaska Anchorage.
- c) Kue Young asked the membership to consider the development of a summer institute on Arctic health, possibly for the summer of 2010. A possible location could be Anchorage, with the sponsoring institution being the University of Alaska. The idea was well received.
- d) Kue Young reported on the Sustainable Arctic Observing Networks (SAON) initiative with a recent meeting in Edmonton attended by several INCHR members. The idea of a Circumpolar Health Observatory was proposed, monitoring and reporting on a continuous basis different aspects of the health status and health determinants of Arctic populations. An initial project could be the development of a circumpolar health atlas. Although there was some interest in the concept, concern was also raised as to the potential target audience for the information, since public health policy is often focused locally and nationally. The members will give this more thought and further discussion will be pursued.
- e) Laura Arbour spoke on the IUCH birth defects working group, which she co-chairs with Arild Vaktskjold. Together with members from Russia, Canada, and Greenland, they have been developing a document for the IPY AHHI, which describes the current state of circumpolar maternal child health surveillance. All known registries in circumpolar countries are included. Alan Parkinson suggested that maternal child health surveillance be included in the mandate of the International Circumpolar Surveillance project, which is part of the Arctic Council's Sustainable Development Working Group. There was discussion as to the format of that and the challenges of accessing and sharing of information. It

- was agreed that any information that is already in the public domain could be eligible, including the comparative report in progress. Laura Arbour will discuss the potential of joining the ICS project with the other members of the working group.
- f) Susan Chatwood and Pam Orr spoke on behalf of the ICCH 2009 planning committee on the progress of the Congress to be held in July 12-16th 2009 in Yellowknife. They are confident that an excellent program is well underway. A website is under construction:
http://www.hlthss.gov.nt.ca/Features/Programs_and_Services/icch/icch_2009.htm
- g) Since elections are to be held every three years for board members and the executive of the INCHR, Laura Arbour was asked to distribute guidelines for elections to the members. The election is due to be held in Yellowknife in 2009. She will review the bylaws and proceed to develop a procedure for elections, which will be distributed to the membership after review by the board.

The Executive and members of the Board are as follows:

- President: Kue Young (Canada),
 - Vice President: Juhanni Hassi (Finland),
 - Secretary-Treasurer: Laura Arbour (Canada)
 - Additional Members: Brian Saylor (Alaska-USA), Gert Mulvad (Greenland) Anders Koch (Denmark), Andrew Kozlov (Russia).
5. **Next Meeting:** The forth annual meeting of INCHR will be held in July of 2009 in Yellowknife, Northwest Territories, Canada.