

ASSOCIATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH EPIDEMIOLOGISTS IN ONTARIO



> TO ADVANCE & PROMOTE THE DISCIPLINE

& PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE OF EPIDEMIOLOGY

IN ONTARIO PUBLIC HEALTH UNITS

APHEO > ANNUAL REPORT 2002

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

Adam Stevens > President, Brant County Health Unit	Brenda Coleman > VP, Elgin-St. Thomas Health Unit	Stephanie McFaul > Secretary-Treasurer, Hastings & Prince Edward Counties Health Unit.
Anne Marie Holt > alPHa Rep, Haliburton, Kawartha, Pine Ridge District Health Unit	Nancy Day > OPHA Rep, Toronto Public Health	Ruth Sanderson > OCCHA Rep, Middlesex-London Health Unit

PRESIDENT'S REPORT > KEEP ON KEEPING ON

Submitted by: Adam Stevens

The title of last year's report was "A Look Both Ways" and the previous year it was "What's Ahead for APHEO". Somehow I didn't think I would get away with "A Look Backwards, ...Sideways, ...Inside-Out, or ...Upside-Down", so I put away my directional notions and let the music inspire me. Within moments I was struck by a verse in a Bob Dylan classic: "The only thing I knew how to do was to keep on keeping on like a bird that flew." But the title of the song was definitely not appropriate for APHEO. In no way was APHEO 'Tangled up in Blue' during the past year. In fact, 2002 was an extremely busy and productive year for most Public Health Epidemiologists. Projects, like the Perinatal Survey Strategies funding kept us working late hours, and a number of epidemiologists were busy with the Rapid Risk Factor Surveillance System (RRFSS) and/or the Canadian Community Health Survey (CCHS). If we weren't trying to analyze the 2001 CCHS without error estimates, then we were choosing modules for the 2003 CCHS. Add RRFSS module selection and analysis on top of that, and I'm sure some could barely catch their breath as they tried to 'keep on keeping on' with all of their duties and responsibilities.

And we did many new things as an organization last year too. The year 2002 will be known as the first year that APHEO spent as a Constituent Society of OPHA. Our 2001 president, Terry Delmore, proudly stated that our joining of OPHA as a Constituent Society in January 2002 would provide us with new opportunities to bring epidemiologic issues and APHEO priorities to the attention of a broader audience. I think we just began to grasp the full extent of that reality in 2002, with much more communication passed back

and forth among the other Constituent Societies at the OPHA table, and many more opportunities for APHEO to provide input and add our perspective to discussion and feedback on a number of issues that came via OPHA. Not that this is our only opportunity for inter-professional discussion. APHEO continues to reach a broader audience via representation and discourse at alPHa and OCCHA.

Furthermore, 2002 was an expansion year for our annual conference. In 2002 the APHEO conference was expanded from 1.5 to 2 full days, so that we could incorporate more workshop activity into the event, and make it more worthwhile for attendants. Sixty-five delegates attended "Measuring Environmental Impacts on Health" in an Ontario resort setting, and it was Top Notch!

Another major accomplishment – the new website by the Public Health Indicators Working Group (PHIWG) for "Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario", which contains definitions for over 120 indicators for public health. This website and its utility was demonstrated at the 2002

APHEO conference. Ever since, it has received nothing but positive regard.

In addition, our extra effort and comfort with teleconferencing, and fewer face-to-face meetings, has provided the opportunity for all of our members to feel welcome joining committees. No longer is being from the "North" an automatic exclusion to being a member of the APHEO executive (or one of the worthwhile committees).

So again, I say 2002 was an extremely busy and productive year for APHEO, and I don't doubt that APHEO will 'keep on keeping on' through 2003 and beyond!



Members of APHEO participated on the following committees in 2002:

1. **Provincial Health Indicators Working Group (PHIWG)**

Established: February 1998

- > APHEO members: 10 APHEO members and 7 members from HIUs, ICES, MOHLTC; Mary-Anne Pietrusiak, Chair (Durham Region)
- > Purpose: systematically define and operationalize a core set of health status indicators using, as a framework, an elaboration of the Ontario Mandatory Programs and Services Guidelines; promote use of the indicators and encourage public health units, district health councils, health intelligence units and others to adopt the indicators as defined and to generate the indicators for their areas.
- > 2002 Accomplishments: PHIWG worked hard in 2002 to revise the indicators and resources of the Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario. A student hired by the Central East Health Information Partnership created a website to showcase the extensive information (www.cehip.org/apheo/indicators). The website was launched at the 2002 APHEO Conference in Grand Bend.

2. **Health Canada's Skills Enhancement for Health Surveillance Program**

- > Established: 2000
- > APHEO members: 7 APHEO members including Carla Troy from Health Canada
- > Mandate: To increase the skills of staff in local public health departments and regional health authorities across Canada in the areas of epidemiology, surveillance, and information management.
- > 2002 Accomplishments: APHEO members provided invaluable consultative services including: feedback on the content and design of the first series of three on-line modules, "Basic Epidemiological Concepts", "Measurement of Health Status" and "Descriptive Epidemiology", input while attending a regional consultative workshop and a facilitation training workshop, identification of



potential on-line facilitators, as well as acting as national and local facilitators. An APHEO review team was formed with 10 members to provide consultative services to the Skills program in 2003.

3. **Effective Public Health Practice Project**

- > Established: September 1998
- > APHEO member: Catherine Bingle (Simcoe)
- > Mandate: Maintain province-wide participation in the development and dissemination of systematic reviews and other related activities.
- > 2002 Accomplishments: APHEO members contributed to annual identification and prioritization of topics for reviews and summary statements. Eleven summary statements were produced on the Effectiveness of Public Health Interventions and APHEO members contributed by authoring a few of these, including Shanni Gates (Leeds, Grenville, Lanark) – re: folate supplementation, Elizabeth Rolland (Kingston) – re: fluoride gels, and Catherine Bingle (Simcoe) – re: optimal breast feeding duration; and interventions to health care professionals. A systematic review was released on school-based strategies for primary prevention of obesity and for promoting physical activity and/or nutrition. Also, a review on Improving Mental Health in Children was completed. Reviews on West Nile Virus and Heart Health Interventions were in progress in 2002.

4. **OCCHA Marketing Committee**

- > APHEO member: Ruth Sanderson, Chair (Middlesex-London)
- > Mandate: enhance customer service and ensure widespread knowledge of the accreditation process.
- > Major 2002 accomplishments include member organization visits by the

Executive Director, establishment of a Continuous Quality Assurance Task Force, enhancement of the OCCHA website, www.occha.org, and award of Seal of Excellence to 3 Health Units.

5. **HELPS Advisory Committee**

- > Established: 1996; Suspended: 1997
- > Reinstated: 1998; Suspended: 1999
- > Reinstated: June 2001
- > APHEO members: 12 APHEO members including one HIU rep, and Elizabeth Rael from the Public Health Branch of the MOHLTC.
- > Purpose: provide advice to the Public Health Branch of the Ontario Ministry of Health on strategic directions, development and implementation for the Health Planning System (HELPS).
- > 2002 Accomplishments: Several meetings and data releases: vital statistics 1998, vital statistics 1999, Ontario Breast Screening Program summary tables 2000 and 2001, death and live-birth data files with postal codes 1998 and 1999, and still birth data files without postal codes 1998 and 2000.

6. **Integrated Services for Children Information System (ISCIS)**

- > Established: January 2002
- > APHEO members: Brenda Coleman (Elgin St. Thomas), Mary-Anne Pietrusiak (Durham Region)
- > Purpose: Work with the MOHLTC to develop a computer program that would extract data from ISCIS in a format compatible with SPSS to derive indicators on maternal and newborn health from the Health Babies Health Children Program.
- > Status in 2002: The MOHLTC team was successful in creating the extract program based on epidemiologic input. The program was beta tested by Brenda Coleman, Mary-Anne Pietrusiak, Terry Delmore (Halton), Stephanie McFaul (Hastings & Prince Edward Counties), and Hong Ge (Simcoe County) and subsequently revised. Integrated Services for Children Division distributed the final product to all health units in December 2002.

MEMBERSHIP REPORT

Submitted by: **Stephanie McFaul**

APHEO membership experiences an all time high in 2002! Over the course of the year, APHEO boasted a total membership of 89 members: 39 members and 50 affiliate members. This represents a 16% increase in memberships from 2001.

One quarter of our 2002 membership were new recruits to APHEO. A total of 6 new members and 17 new affiliate

members joined the existing APHEO group.

As new members continue to grow, so do our returning members. Sixty-six individuals were returning from 2001, 33 of whom were members and 33 who were affiliates.

Congratulations APHEO!



OCCHA

ONTARIO COUNCIL ON COMMUNITY HEALTH ACCREDITATION (OCCHA) REPORT

Submitted by: **Ruth Sanderson**

This past year was one of growth as OCCHA endeavored to strengthen support for the accreditation process, explore other continuous quality improvement activities and nurture partnerships to support its work. OCCHA is an independent agency whose mission is to promote excellence in public health programs and services. Through the accreditation process, OCCHA provides an independent, voluntary, peer evaluation of the administrative and operational aspects of local public health agencies, including a review of program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. More information on OCCHA can be found on their website at www.occha.org.

Currently there are 14 public health units accredited. Four health units were accredited during 2002; three re-accreditation surveys (Algoma, Leeds-Grenville & Lanark, Niagara) and one first time survey (Durham). Three health units (Simcoe County, Brant County and Wellington-Dufferin-Guelph) received the "Seal of Excellence Award" in June 2002. This is awarded to health units with five or more continuous years of accredited status.

The major undertaking of OCCHA in 2002 was the development of a discussion paper "Developing A Structure for Accountability: How OCCHA and Accreditation Can Work For Public Health". This paper is based on OCCHA's strategic planning process and addresses some of the priorities/issues

identified in their provincial stakeholder survey. This report was sent out to APHEO members through the APHEOLIST on June 7, 2002 and APHEO reviewed and provided formal feedback to OCCHA on the discussion paper.

A number of new standards to be used in the accreditation process were sent out to health units and member organizations for feedback in November 2002. The new standards more clearly reflect the Mandatory Health Programs and Services Guidelines and expand the review sections on program planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation. A surveyor-training workshop will be offered with the implementation of these new standards.

A Task Force on Continuous Quality Improvement in Public Health, supported by OCCHA, met for the first time in December 2002. The purpose of this committee is to define continuous quality improvement in public health and to review and revise, as appropriate, OCCHA's standards to more fully incorporate CQI components.

OCCHA continues to be a partner, along with PHRED and alPHa in the Ontario Benchmarking Project. The Director of OCCHA has assumed responsibility as the Chairperson of this partnership and has focused the Partnership on developing a business plan for benchmarking.

alPHa

alPHa REPORT

Submitted by: **Anne Marie Holt**

The Association of Public Health Agencies (alPHa) is a non-profit organization that provides leadership to boards of health and public health units in Ontario. alPHa advises and lends expertise to members on the governance, administration and management of health units.

2002 was a year of transition for alPHa. For the first time, the Public Health Branch, Ministry of Health and Long term Care failed to provide an operating grant to the Association. Despite this set back, the alPHa Board of Directors reviewed the strategic direction of the association and continued to work toward its goal of becoming a strong, viable organization for the future.

The structure of the Association's Standing Committees also changed. The Governance & Administration and Public

Health Issues Committees were amalgamated into one new "Advocacy Committee" of the alPHa board and a public health personnel shortage committee was struck.

In 2002, alPHa expanded services to the membership through increased electronic communications to members and the alPHa teleseminar series that provides teleconference presentations on specific public health related topics to health unit staff.

Over the past year, alPHa has met with the province on a number of issues. These include: West Nile virus, tobacco legislation, mandatory health programs & services guidelines and health unit funding. The association also followed the Romanow Commission very closely, advocating for a greater emphasis on disease prevention and health promotion initiatives in health care system reform.

In January 2002 APHEO became a Constituent Society of the Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA). The mission of OPHA is to "To strengthen the impact of people who are active in community and public health throughout Ontario". APHEO felt that by joining the OPHA Board two key benefits would be realized. First, public health epidemiological issues would be brought to a larger table where broader support could be found in addressing these issues. Second, APHEO would bring an epidemiological perspective to the broad range of community health issues addressed by the OPHA Board.

OPHA identified 4 strategic directions for 2002 / 2003. These included:

1. Strengthen linkages with organizations that have a strategic role in impacting on public health issues.
2. Take action to further the understanding and to effect positive change regarding Determinants of Health.
3. Position a public health, population health and health promotion perspective on health care reform.
4. Support initiatives to foster education, recruitment and retention of public health professionals.

An extensive range of activities occurred to address these strategic directions including, for example, action relative to the Walkerton Inquiry, air quality, nutritional labeling, Romanow Commission, alco-

hol policy, access and equity indicators, etc. Activities involved the OPHA Workgroups, members, and partnerships with Constituent Societies and other organizations.

The OPHA annual conference was held in York Region in November with the theme "Partners Moving Beyond Borders". At the conference, Health Minister Tony Clement announced 5 year funding for the next phase of the Heart Health program. Dr. Colin D'Cuhna released the 2002 Chief Medical Officer of Health Report "Injury: Predictable and Preventable". Conference presenters covered a wide range of topics related to working in partnerships and creative responses to issues.

FINANCIAL REPORT

Submitted by: Stephanie McFaul

Income (January 01, 2002 - January 02, 2003)

Conference 2001 (past due)	\$ 325.00
Conference 2002 - Registrations	15,017.00
Conference 2002 - Sponsorships	2,700.00
Health Canada Contract	14,500.00
Interest	27.00
Memberships 2002	2,662.00
Memberships 2003	500.00
Total Income	\$ 35,731.00

Expenses

Annual Report	\$ 320.00
Conference	27,905.00
Executive Teleconferences	1,000.00
General Meeting Expenses	225.00
Gifts Given	109.00
Lapel Pins	497.00
Mailing Costs	14.00
Miscellaneous	86.00
OPHA Constituent Society Fee	750.00
Travel Expenses - alPHa	90.00
Total Expenses	\$ 30,996.00

Total Income - Expenses \$ 4,735.00

Balance Forward

Chequing	12,355.84
Investments	2,174.62
Total Balance Forward	\$ 14,530.46

Overall Total \$ 19,265.46

2002 APHEO CONFERENCE > MEASURING ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON HEALTH

Submitted by: Sherri Ennis

The 2002 APHEO Conference was at the Oakwood Inn Resort on the shores of lake Huron just north of Grand Bend, Ontario. The goals were to provide practical information on the key aspects of measuring environmental impacts on public health, to share specific examples and case studies of environmental investigations related to public health and to develop a network of contacts in the area of environmental health.

Dr. Pierre Gosselin launched the conference by providing an introduction to the relationship between the environment and public health. Next, Dr. Susan Elliott provided a review of a study on the Sydney Tar Ponds. Katija Blaine followed with an examination of issues related to risk communication and media relations. The final morning session was a launch of the web site for the Core Indicators for Public Health in Ontario (www.cehip.org/apheo/indicators). In the afternoon, Barry Jessiman presented on air quality issues. Tye Arbuckle followed with a discussion of the reproductive effects of pesticides. Finally, France Lemieux provided a presentation on drinking water. Day one ended with a panel discussion involving all invited speakers facilitated by Dr. Iris Gutmanis. Day two of the conference opened with oral presentations from selected abstract submissions. The final session of the conference was a highlight for many with an Environmental Health Investigation Workshop led by Dr. Linda Panaro.

Both the educational components and the social networking opportunities were well received by the 65 conference delegates. The conference's success was a result of the hard working organizing committee including Sherri Ennis, Brenda Guarda, Anne Marie Holt, Mary-Anne Pietrusiak, Rolf Putschinger, Donna Reynolds, Ruth Sanderson, Heather Schouten and Carla Troy, and supported by confersense planners inc. The 2003 APHEO Conference will be in Kingston, Ontario and will examine epidemiological issues around Child Health. See you there!