

Patterns of health and disease are largely a consequence of how we learn, live and work.



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PULSE

Considerable attention is currently being directed to the associated causes and solutions related to obesity trends. Through the application of a population health lens, the complex interaction of social and environmental determinants of healthy weights may be examined and addressed.

Welcome to the spring 2005 edition of *Health of the Nation*. Included in this issue is an exploration into current work related to the theme of the second individual report in our *Improving the Health of Canadians* series, which will be released in the winter of 2006: healthy weights.

Our aim in producing *Health of the Nation* is to provide a pan-Canadian voice, perspective and forum for dialogue on population health issues.

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INSIGHTS AND HIGHLIGHTS

Health of the Nation was launched in February 2004 in conjunction with the Canadian Population Health Initiative (CPHI) flagship report, *Improving the Health of Canadians*. Release of this report set the stage for the focus of *Health of the Nation*—taking action to improve population health knowledge generation, synthesis and exchange. This newsletter aims to promote CPHI activities, including funded research, synthesis papers and workshop reports.

Health of the Nation is produced and distributed quarterly.

View past editions of *Health of the Nation* at www.cihi.ca/cphi.



Improving the Health of Canadians 2004 is available at www.cihi.ca/cphi.

CPHI Expert Advisory Groups

As reported in the winter 2004 edition of *Health of the Nation*, the second *Improving the Health of Canadians* report will be released as a series of three individual reports. The first of these reports, **Healthy Transitions to Adulthood**, is scheduled for release in the fall of 2005. Researchers, decision-makers and youth in the Expert Advisory Group who have provided advice throughout the development of the *Healthy Transitions to Adulthood* report include:

- **Ian Potter** (Chair), Assistant Deputy Minister for First Nations and Inuit Health Branch, Health Canada
- **Dianne Bascombe**, Director, National Children's Alliance
- **Leanne Boyd**, Manager, Policy Development, Research and Evaluation, Healthy Child Manitoba
- **Satya Brink**, Director, Human Resources and Skills Development, Learning Policy Directorate
- **Catherine Donovan**, Medical Officer of Health, Health and Community Services, Eastern Region, Newfoundland and Labrador
- **Rodney Laprise**, Youth Representative, The Students' Commission, Centre of Excellence for Youth Engagement
- **Douglas McCall**, Executive Director, Canadian Association for School Health
- **Tom McIntosh**, Director, Health Network, Canadian Policy Research Networks

The second individual report, **Healthy Weights**, is due for release in the winter of 2006. Researchers and decision-makers serving on the Expert Advisory Group for Healthy Weights include:

- **John Millar** (Chair), Executive Director, Population Health Surveillance and Disease Control Planning, Provincial Health Services Authority, Vancouver, B.C.
- **Theresa Glanville**, Professor, Applied Human Nutrition, Mount Saint Vincent University
- **Jean Harvey**, Interim Executive Director, Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada
- **Mark Tremblay**, Senior Scientific Advisor on Health Measurement, Statistics Canada
- **Hasan Hutchison**, Assistant Director, Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes, Canadian Institutes of Health Research
- **Neil MacDonald**, Director, Population Health Strategies, Alberta Health and Wellness
- **Sylvie Stachenko**, Interim Deputy Chief Public Health Officer, Public Health Agency of Canada

The Canadian Population Health Initiative would like to thank the members of the Expert Advisory Groups for their invaluable contribution to the development of the *Improving the Health of Canadians 2005–2006 Report Series*.



WHAT'S NEW?



Developing a Healthy Communities Index: A Collection of Papers

Patterns of health and disease are largely a consequence of how we learn, live and work. In turn, how we learn, live and work is influenced by the community in which we live. While there is growing awareness that communities may have a beneficial or a detrimental effect on health, many questions remain about why certain communities are healthier than others.

As part of a focus on place and health, CPHI commissioned eight prominent experts to share their visions of what makes a community healthy and how this might be conceptualized and measured. The resulting papers on building a healthy communities index are original opinion-oriented think pieces that were written to help broaden the use of health-related indicators beyond health services, individual health status and economic markers. For the purpose of this collection, each writer was asked "What would an index of healthy communities include?" Depending on their area of expertise, some of the authors were also asked to provide a special focus to their paper. Thus, the collection of papers traces the various stages in the development of a healthy communities index (for example, sharing past experiences, planning a healthy communities index, creating a list of possible indicators and situating the need for such an index in the current socio-political context); the collection also provides special consideration for populations such as children, youth and Aboriginal communities.

The following authors contributed to this collection of papers: Robert Pampalon, Daniel Friedman, Christopher Lalonde, Elizabeth Beader, William Boyce, Ronald Colman, Clyde Hertzman and John Burrett.

Developing a Healthy Communities Index: A Collection of Papers is available, free of charge, on the CPHI Web site at www.cihi.ca/cphi.



Select Highlights on Public Views of the Determinants of Health

CPHI is pleased to announce the release of the summary report, *Select Highlights on Public Views of the Determinants of Health*.

A key objective of the Canadian Population Health Initiative is to promote dialogue on the determinants of health. Essential to the achievement of this objective is an examination of the public's perception and understanding of health and the factors considered to influence health. In 2003–2004, CPHI conducted a public views project to study the Canadian public's understanding of population health issues. *Select Highlights on Public Views of the Determinants of Health* discusses the findings synthesized from the following inputs:

- Secondary analysis of the *Citizens' Dialogue on the Future of Health Care in Canada*
- Public opinion surveys: 2003 survey conducted by CPHI and a review of previous public opinion surveys on population health-related issues
- Media monitoring of key national and regional newspapers for major health stories

Analyses of these components indicated that lifestyle behaviours such as diet, physical activity and smoking were considered to be important health issues, while broader determinants like income, education and social support were less well recognized as factors contributing to overall health. *Select Highlights on Public Views of the Determinants of Health* contributes insight regarding the extent to which there is an opportunity to foster a better understanding of the complex interaction of determinants that affect individual and community health and well-being.

Select Highlights on Public Views of the Determinants of Health may be downloaded from the CPHI Web site at www.cihi.ca/cphi.

POPULATION HEALTH AROUND CANADA

Research Results—Getting the Word Out

The Canadian Population Health Initiative has begun to disseminate the results of its funded research program. Of the 44 programs and projects funded, 28 final reports have been received to date. To facilitate knowledge transfer, CPHI began posting summaries of research results on the Web site in November 2004, including links to full reports and publications (as applicable). CPHI will continue to post results of funded research programs and projects as they are completed. Please see our [research results](#) to access current postings, including:

- *Assessing the Health of Communities: Indicator Projects and Their Impacts*
Jim Frankish, Institute for Health Promotion Research
University of British Columbia
- *Immigrants, Selectivity and Mental Health*
Zheng Wu, Department of Sociology
University of Victoria

Publications Based on CPHI-Funded Research

Effectiveness of School Programs in the Prevention of Childhood Obesity: A Multilevel Comparison

According to a new CPHI-funded study conducted by Dr. Paul Veugelers, University of Alberta (formerly of Dalhousie University) and Angela L. Fitzgerald, Dalhousie University, students in Nova Scotia schools that had a coordinated healthy living program had significantly lower rates of overweight and obesity, had healthier diets and reported more physical activity than students from schools that did not have a program. The researchers surveyed 5,200 fifth-grade students in 282 public schools in Nova Scotia, along with their parents and school principals. Student height and weight were measured, dietary intake was assessed and information was collected on physical and sedentary activities. The results of the study were published on February 22, 2005 in the *American Journal of Public Health*. To access the article, please see <http://www.ajph.org/cgi/content/full/95/3/432>.

[View the media release.](#)

Knowledge Exchange

As a knowledge broker, the Canadian Population Health Initiative conducts ongoing environmental scanning to identify programs and initiatives related to the issues of overweight and obesity.

If you have an initiative or program you would like to bring to our attention, please send a brief description to cphi@cihi.ca.

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LOOKING FORWARD

Programs and Policies Related to Achieving Healthy Weights in Canada: An Inventory

The Canadian Population Health Initiative has contracted the Atlantic Health Promotion Research Centre to update and enhance the Healthy Eating and Active Living (HEAL) policy and initiatives inventory. The HEAL inventory will identify and review a broad range of policies and initiatives (both formal and informal) that promote healthy eating and active living in Canada. Analysis of identified policies and initiatives will be completed, from a population health perspective, with a report of this analysis scheduled for publication in early 2006.

Public Views on Healthy Body Weights

One of the major activities of CPHI is to engage Canadians in an informed discussion on health issues by creating opportunities for knowledge exchange and generating policy debate and dialogue. As part of our ongoing effort to achieve this objective, CPHI will be examining public views on healthy body weights in an effort to understand:

- What Canadians consider to be important factors that facilitate and hinder maintaining healthy body weights among the adult population; and
- The public perception of the role of individuals and others, including communities, organizations and governments, in addressing nutrition and physical activity issues with respect to healthy weights.

Two projects are being undertaken to obtain public views on healthy body weights:

1. A public opinion survey will be conducted to examine people's understanding of factors that contribute to maintaining healthy body weights.
2. The media will be monitored to examine major health stories relating to body weights in key national and regional newspapers.

The findings from both components of the study will serve to inform the healthy weights report, the second individual report in the *Improving the Health of Canadians 2005–2006 Report Series*.

CONNECTIONS

In this section, you'll find profiles of what is happening in population health in Canada, including how the collective understanding of research is expanding and how the research can be used in policy development and evaluation, as well as knowledge exchange. To submit to Connections, please email healthofthenation@cihi.ca. The topics found in the Connections section of the e-newsletter should not be construed as an endorsement by CPHI/CIHI of that material and are not an indication of CPHI/CIHI's commitment to any particular course of action.

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)—Request for Applications

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research has announced the following request for applications:

- [Reducing Health Disparities and Promoting Equity for Vulnerable Populations—Interdisciplinary Capacity Enhancement Grants](#)
- [Population and Public Health Research Methods and Tools—Pilot Project Grants](#)
- [Scoping Reviews and Research Syntheses: Priority Health Services and System Issues](#)

For more information on the Canadian Institutes of Health Research, please visit www.cihr.ca.

If you would like to submit to the Connections section of *Health of the Nation*, please visit our Web site, at www.cihi.ca/cphi, for complete submission criteria and guidelines.

(cont'd)

CONNECTIONS

Canadian Institutes of Health Research (CIHR)— Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (INMD)

The Institute of Nutrition, Metabolism and Diabetes (INMD) will consider for funding highly ranked applications submitted to the CIHR operating grants competition that fall below the cut-off of the open competition and are considered relevant to the strategic initiative, [Excellence, Innovation and Advancement in the Study of Obesity and Healthy Body Weight](#).

The objectives of the INMD strategic initiative are to:

- Place obesity on the national health research agenda;
- Build capacity to undertake obesity/healthy body weight research; and
- Fund excellent research aimed at understanding the problem of obesity and maintenance of healthy body weight.

INMD's contribution to a single grant will be based on peer review committee recommendations, but will not exceed \$200,000. Operating grants will be funded for a period of up to three years. For more information, please visit <http://www.cihr-irsc.gc.ca/e/19739.html#inmd>.

Alberta Centre for Active Living

In the February 2005 issue of *WellSpring*, Jamie Yakemchuk, Education Coordinator for the Alberta Centre for Active Living, discusses the pros and cons of three of the main ways of measuring obesity: body mass index (BMI), waist-to-hip ratio, and waist circumference. To view this article, please visit <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/Publications/WellSpring/2005/FebArticle.html>.

Dr. Vicki Harber (Associate Professor, Faculty of Physical Education and Recreation, University of Alberta, Edmonton, Alberta) comments on this article from a research perspective. To view this article, please visit <http://www.centre4activeliving.ca/Publications/WellSpring/2005/FebCommentary.html>.

Moving Ahead

The Canadian Population Health Initiative strives to deliver objective and credible information on population health issues through our four complementary functions:

- Knowledge generation and synthesis
- Policy synthesis and analysis
- Knowledge exchange
- Knowledge transfer and reporting

It's Your Turn

To evaluate our contribution of relevant, timely and evidence-based knowledge, we are requesting anecdotes that illustrate how CPHI-generated information is used for sound decision-making.

Please email your story to healthofthenation@cihi.ca.

CDPAC Selects Top Policy Options for Reducing Obesity in Canada

The Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance of Canada (CDPAC) continues its work in coordinating collaborative action on obesity with the latest announcement of top policy priorities for reducing obesity in Canada. Through the project entitled "Practical Policy Options and Tools for the Reduction of Chronic Disease in Canada: Reducing the Epidemic of Obesity," CDPAC convened the Obesity Expert Advisory Committee, consisting of top research and policy experts from across the country, to analyze the policy options outlined in CIHI/CPHI's *Overweight and Obesity in Canada* report. Next steps include the creation of an obesity "community of practice" on the CDPAC Web site and a policy forum to create a comprehensive action plan for moving forward a key policy option. For more information, please see www.cdpac.ca.



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