



CALIFORNIA TRIBAL EPIDEMIOLOGY CENTER

Newsletter: Winter 2012

4400 Auburn Blvd 2nd Floor Sacramento CA 95841
916-929-9761
epicenter@crihb.net

Record Linkage Studies. As part of our ongoing mission to enhance the quality of health data for American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) in California, the California Tribal Epidemiology Center (CTEC) is again preparing record linkage studies. CTEC is developing record linkage projects to improve data in the areas of sexually transmitted diseases (STD) and injury among AIAN in California. Although cases of STDs and injury occur at very high rates, especially among our youth population in many Indian Health Service (IHS) areas, state data suggests a lower disease burden among AIAN in California. Based on the results of past data linkage studies, CTEC is concerned that racial misclassification of AIAN may hide the true number of cases among AIAN in California. To improve the data for our state's AIAN population, CTEC will conduct the record linkage studies in collaboration with government entities including the California Department of Public Health (CDPH), the Office of Statewide Health Planning and Development (OSHPD), and IHS. CTEC is in the process of requesting data from these agencies.



In addition to the aforementioned projects, there is also a forthcoming record linkage study in mental health. Through these studies, CTEC can provide more accurate information about AIAN health to Tribes and Indian Health Programs (IHPs). For more information or questions, please contact Lan Le at 916-929-9761 or via email at lan.le@crihb.net.

Breast Cancer Intensive Training Program. In October 2011, CTEC, in collaboration with the University of California (UC) Davis Cancer Center, was selected to participate in a Breast Cancer Intensive Training Program (ITP) offered by the Community-Based Research Infrastructure for Better Science Project. CTEC staff will receive training in community-based participatory research through live meetings and online modules over the course of five months. Completion of the breast cancer ITP will prepare CTEC to be highly competitive when applying for research grants in breast cancer research. This is an important area of research considering breast cancer is the leading type of cancer affecting American Indian women, occurring one out of every four cancer cases. We are fortunate for this opportunity to strengthen our ability to serve American Indians in California and to work to reduce the number of breast cancer cases in our communities.





Good day everyone,

Once again, I have the great pleasure of providing the community of Indian Health Programs, AIANs in California and those interested in reducing AIAN health disparities a brief update on recent CTEC activities and our plans for the 2011-2012 program year. We've been around for six years now and look forward to bigger and better things for the next five years – and beyond.

From a personal perspective, I'm happiest about completing our consultations with CTEC-member Indian Health Programs and identifying opportunities to collaborate on projects and offer our technical expertise. It is through these in-person site visits that often open a door to collaboration. Despite upcoming funding issues which will keep us from traveling as much as we have in the past, it is our hope that Indian Health Programs and AIAN communities will continue to offer us feedback on what health issues are of concern to them by filling out our quick online survey: <http://www.crihb.org/indian-health-priorities.html>. This information helps us to align our goals with those whom we serve. CTEC also completed the CDPH, Office of Binational Border Health, Early Warning Infectious Disease Surveillance (EWIDS) funded grant, in which we assessed infectious disease reporting of Indian Health Programs and the emergency preparedness needs of Tribes and assisted two Indian Health Programs in joining the EWIDS influenza-like-illness surveillance system.



From left: Lan Le (CDC Fellow), Virginia Myers (Yurok/Karuk, Outreach Coordinator), Kristal Chichlowska (Colville/Spokane) PhD, MPH (Director), Richelle Harklerode MPH (Epidemiologist), Thomas Kim MD, MPH (Medical Epidemiologist)

Another major accomplishment includes the re-funding of CTEC as the CA-area epidemiology center for the next five years. We couldn't have accomplished this goal without the support of the Tribes and Indian Health Programs; 37 Tribes provided resolutions, and 24 Tribes and 19 Indian Health Programs provided letters of support. Major plans in the works include conducting a Tribal-specific Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) survey which will allow us to investigate what behaviors and lifestyle choices may affect the chance of poor health in our communities. This information will be useful for planning, initiating, monitoring and evaluating health promotion and disease prevention programs. We also plan to conduct two linkage studies to improve the accuracy of racial classification of AIANs in state health databases.

Other good news in the office includes the completion of a certificate in Maternal and Child Health Epidemiology by Virginia Myers, and the addition of new staff member, Lan Le, CDC Public Health Associate. Lastly, I want to thank CRIHB for the generous family-friendly policy which has allowed me to bring my second daughter, Natalia Rae, to work with me until she is six months of age.

We are very fortunate to have a highly skilled and competent staff at CTEC who are dedicated to improving AIAN health in California, and I look forward to what this great group will accomplish in the new year ahead.

Best wishes,

Kristal Chichlowska (Colville/Spokane), PhD, MPH

Tribal Infectious Disease Project. CTEC has completed this project in collaboration with the EWIDS program and submitted our final report. The goals were to assess current notifiable disease reporting, emergency preparedness capacity and implement influenza-like illness (ILI) case reporting to EWIDS by interested IHPs.



To meet these goals, CTEC staff implemented several activities:

- Enhanced EWIDS cultural competency: On July 7, 2010 CTEC Outreach Coordinator Virginia Myers (Yurok/Karuk) provided a cultural competency training for seven EWIDS staff members on working with American Indian communities in California. The training was developed by the TECs for Northwest Portland, Southern Plains, and California.
- Outreached to IHPs and Tribes: CTEC visited all of the IHPs in the EWIDS service area to discuss the ILI reporting system. CTEC also met with nine Tribes and the Southern California Tribal Chairman's Association to gather surveys on emergency preparedness capacity.
- Assessed notifiable disease reporting at IHPs: Due to the diversity in governing structures and laws of California's Tribes, there is currently no common standard procedure in place among Tribes for reporting notifiable diseases. From the surveys collected, we found that most IHPs provide information to counties on cases of notifiable diseases. Most IHPs indicated that additional outreach workers and training would improve the clinic's ability to prevent, treat, identify and report cases of infectious diseases.
- Assessed emergency preparedness capacity of Tribes: CTEC gathered and analyzed surveys from 14 of the 18 Tribes in the EWIDS service area. The survey results showed that Tribes are at varying levels of emergency preparedness capacity, with some focusing on more pressing matters. Overall, respondents reported that Tribes were most prepared for wildfires and least prepared for an epidemic. A detailed analysis was provided in the final report.

We thank Tribes in the EWIDS service area for their participation in this important project. Your insights will guide our future efforts to strengthen public health practices protecting Tribal communities. For further information, please contact CTEC Epidemiologist, Richelle Harklerode at 916-929-9761 or via email at richelle.harklerode@crihb.net.

Public Health Associate Program (PHAP). CTEC was selected to host a Centers for Disease Control & Prevention (CDC) PHAP fellow, and on August 1, 2011 welcomed Lan Le as the newest team member to CTEC. Lan graduated from Stanford University with a Bachelor of Arts degree in Human Biology with a community health focus. Recently, he was a Senate Fellow with the California State Legislature where he worked on several bills related to health and social welfare. At the age of two, Lan immigrated to the United States with his family as political refugees from Vietnam and grew up in Sacramento. He is an avid tennis fan and tends to watch movies once they have declined in popularity. In the future, he hopes to direct a non-profit that designs and advocates for innovative public health policies and community-based health promotion interventions. Lan will spend two years at CTEC working on projects in the areas of STDs and chronic diseases and is looking forward to learning from Tribal communities in California.



CALIFORNIA TRIBAL EPIDEMIOLOGY CENTER

Newsletter: Winter 2012

4400 Auburn Blvd 2nd Floor Sacramento CA 95841

PH: 916-929-9761

epicenter@crihb.net