

The goal of the ISUH is to encourage research, interventions, policies and programs that lead to healthier and sustainable cities and reduced health disparities for urban populations in the twenty-first century.

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# ISUH Connections

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The 7th International Conference on Urban Health

## An Update on ICUH 2008



The 7th International Conference on Urban Health (ICUH 2008) will take place October 29-31, 2008, at the Westin Bayshore in beautiful Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. This year's conference theme "Knowledge Integration: Successful Interventions in Urban Health" will explore action-oriented, multi-sectoral projects and sustainable best practices. Delegates will be encouraged to move beyond description and share their ground-breaking actions and programs that have improved the health of urban communities.

The conference will aim to bring together researchers, decision makers, practitioners, and community leaders from various disciplines and across geographic boundaries to exchange ideas and advance research and practice that promotes the health of individuals living in urban settings.

The conference schedule will feature an opening ceremony and welcome reception, 8 plenary speakers, pre-conference workshops, community tours

of innovative health services for special populations, networking poster sessions and oral abstract presentations, workshops, and an awards luncheon ceremony.

This year's conference will feature plenary speakers Trudy Harpham (London South Bank University, United Kingdom), Roderick Lawrence (University of Geneva, Switzerland), Jo Ivey Boufford (New York University School of Medicine, USA), Julio Montaner (University of British Columbia, Canada), Hans Rosling (Karolinski Institutet, Stockholm), and Anthony Zwi (University of New South Wales, Sydney).

Abstract submissions that address the conference theme and consider the following sub-themes are welcome: adolescent and child health; aging and health in urban settings; best practices in meeting urban health challenges; community approaches to urban health; diversity and urban health; enforcement, security and urban health; environmental health and justice in urban settings; migration; neighborhood-level influences on health; substance abuse and mental health; urban health from a global perspective; and the urban social environment and health. The online abstract submission process opens April 1 and closes on May 31. Authors will be notified by July 15.

The ICUH 2008 Organizing Committee is looking forward to seeing you at this stimulating event. For more information, visit <http://www.icuh2008.com>.

## Tackling Urban Health Issues in India



*“It is estimated that nearly one-third of India’s urban population live in slums.”*



India is experiencing an explosive growth in its urban population. Estimates state that about 30% of the total population, or 300 million people, now live in towns and cities. This population is estimated to reach 534 million by 2026. Along with rapid urbanization, there is a more rapid growth of the population living in slums. It is estimated that nearly one-third, or nearly 100 million, live in slums characterized by overcrowding, poor hygiene and sanitation and inadequate civic services.

Rapid growth of the urban population has overwhelmed the already inadequate primary health care system. Since slums are often located on land belonging to other agencies, they are considered illegal and vulnerable to eviction. Rapid migration and mobility among slum populations also affect the delivery of healthcare services in urban poor communities.

In order to address these challenges, the Urban Health Resource Centre (UHRC) works in partnership with government and non-governmental stakeholders, academia and slum communities. Its

mission is to bring about sustainable improvements in the health conditions of the urban poor by influencing policies and programs and empowering the community. UHRC has evolved into an independent Indian non-profit organization from the USAID supported Environmental Health Project since 2002. The incorporation of UHRC as an independent and permanent institution is an acknowledgment of the need for a dedicated agency to galvanize support from diverse stakeholders to meet the challenges posed by rapid urbanization and urban poverty.

City demonstration and learning programs constitute one of UHRC’s key activities. These programs have been developed in consultation with the government health department, municipal bodies, NGOs and slum community organizations which bring better understanding of local needs and options into the planning and implementing process. Such programs are currently underway in cities of Indore, Agra, Meerut and Delhi. In Indore, the program has empowered the capacity of community-based organizations to demand for health

care in their communities, facilitate the conduct of health camps and negotiate for better and more regular services from public and private service providers. In Agra, UHRC is facilitating a public-private partnership initiative to expand primary health services in previously unserved slums.

These programs have provided hard evidence on the strategies that work. An important aspect of these programs has also been to identify and map the unlisted slums that are often overlooked by government agencies. Evidence and practical lessons from these programs have lent greater weight to UHRC’s technical assistance efforts with national, state and city governments. Programs in Indore and Agra are regularly utilized as learning sites by government and other stakeholders.

UHRC conducts field based research studies and secondary data analyses to inform government and other stakeholders about urban policies and programming strategies. For more information on UHRC’s activities, visit <http://www.uhrc.in/>.

## WiNHR: Wisconsin Network for Health Research

The state of Wisconsin is known for having a complex health picture. While Wisconsin tends to have excellent health care outcomes overall, there are also many health disparities and associated challenges facing the state. One attempt to improve the health of Wisconsin residents has come through the Wisconsin Network for Health Research (WiNHR).

WiNHR was founded in 2006 as a way to link experts in Wisconsin that are committed to improving the health of the state through research. WiNHR recognized the growing importance of finding innovative ways to address health problems as well as collaborating with researchers who reach diverse patient populations. Clinics that collaborate on WiNHR projects are located in urban areas and small cities thus allowing researchers to study the needs of a diverse population.

Since its inception, WiNHR has focused on using new means to address some of the top health challenges facing the state. The studies center on projects that can translate into real health gains for the communities served by the hospitals in the consortium.

In a current project, WiNHR is researching Warfarin, a commonly used drug that prevents hypercoagulation. Warfarin patients have a high rate of adverse events because the drug has a narrow therapeutic window and each person's dose is individually determined. Early research suggested that developing a dosing calculator based on a person's genetics and personal characteristics could help to eliminate the adverse effects commonly associated with Warfarin in Caucasians. WiNHR is currently developing a dosing calculator for African Americans.

Another study examines

the differences in diabetes related kidney failure in Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino patients. Diabetes costs Americans over 130 million dollars a year and 40% of end stage kidney failure is related to complications of diabetes. Investigators will examine whether there is a difference in the genetic makeup of diabetic Caucasian and Hispanic/Latino patients.

An additional health problem is low infant birth weight and high infant mortality. WiNHR is examining whether certain mycoplasmas found in the mother's reproductive tract during pregnancy could be associated with poor infant health outcomes.

WiNHR projects such as these clearly demonstrate that multi-site research programs can be used to target real health challenges. For more information, contact Ann Schensky at [aes@medicine.wisc.edu](mailto:aes@medicine.wisc.edu).

*"WiNHR links experts in Wisconsin that are committed to improving the health of its residents."*

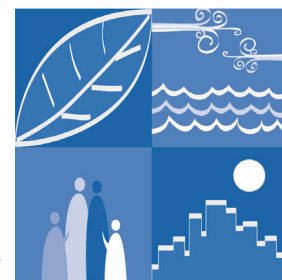
## Join the ISUH!

The International Society for Urban Health (ISUH) facilitates the exchange of perspectives, research methods and data on the study of disease in urban areas and the effect of urbanization on health.

All ISUH members receive a discount on registration for

the annual conference and a subscription to the Journal of Urban Health. Members also receive free online access to the Journal of Urban Health, Journal of Community Health and Journal of Immigrant and Minority Health, which can be accessed through the mem-

bers-only portion of the ISUH website. If you are a member and do not have the login and password, please contact ISUH Coordinator Andrew Quinn at [aquinn@nyam.org](mailto:aquinn@nyam.org). To become a member, visit <http://www.isuh.org> for details and to apply online.



## The Health Impact of Major Sporting Events

In November 2007, it was decided that the 2014 Commonwealth Games are to be held in Glasgow. In 2012, London is set to host the much larger Olympic Games. Although there are studies looking at the health and socioeconomic impacts of hosting a major sporting event on the host community, it is not clear what the aggregate health effects are and what pathways might mediate these effects. A systematic review will therefore be conducted in 2008 by the MRC Social and Public Health Sciences Unit in Glasgow to inform the planning of these events such that any positive health impact can be maximized.

The specific objectives of the review are: (1) to de-

velop and conduct a comprehensive search using bibliographic databases, websites and expert contacts to identify relevant research according to the review protocol; (2) to assess the quality of relevant studies with regard to key methodological characteristics and potential for bias; (3) to synthesize the best available evidence, statistically where appropriate, from included studies to produce a summary of type, size and direction of impacts on health and its determinants; and (4) to identify knowledge gaps in the available research.

The researchers welcome any contact from individuals or organizations who know of existing literature on the impact of a major sporting

event on health or on the determinants of health. The sporting events included will be any occurring between January 1978 and January 2008 of international importance where the event does not have a fixed annual location.

This work will inform a proposed health impact assessment of the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow to be conducted in partnership between Glasgow City Council, Glasgow Center for Population Health, NHS Greater Glasgow and Clyde and East Glasgow Community Health and Care Partnership.

The project leader is Dr. Gerry McCartney and he can be contacted by email at [gerry@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk](mailto:gerry@sphsu.mrc.ac.uk).

*"It is not clear what the aggregate health effects are of hosting a major sporting event on the host community and what pathways mediate these effects."*

## Highlights from the Journal of Urban Health

In the November/December 2007 issue, a new study finds that people are traveling to New York City specifically to commit suicide in a phenomenon known as "suicide tourism" that accounts for 1 in 10 suicides committed in Manhattan since 1990. The authors hope that this and future research will increase our understanding of why certain individuals travel to specific locales to take their lives, and eventually design prevention efforts that focus

on recognizing at-risk individuals and restricting access to means and sites that are repeatedly used. In the same issue, a review of literature on suicidal behavior in subway systems notes that those who commit suicides on subways have a history of mental illness. The authors suggest that researchers work closely with subway personnel and conduct follow-up studies on those who attempt suicide in a subway.

In the January/February

2008 issue, one study found, among a sample of adult women in Baltimore, a high percentage had witnessed community violence and were more likely to experience anxiety or depressive symptoms. The authors conclude that adult women who witness community violence need to be targeted for mental health interventions. Two other studies focused on pediatric mercury and rodent allergen exposure in New York City and Los Angeles, respectively.





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## ISUH Connections

ISUH Connections is a forum for information exchange among ISUH members and other interested in the health of urban populations. Articles do not represent official positions or endorsement by ISUH.

ISUH Connections welcomes submissions of brief articles relevant to the field of urban health (maximum 500 words) for consideration. Notices of events, funding opportunities, positions available or sought and other announcements are also welcome. While ISUH Connections appreciates all submissions, we reserve the right to edit content for accuracy, grammar and space. Please submit materials to Andrew Quinn at [aquinn@nyam.org](mailto:aquinn@nyam.org) or Evie Gogosis at [gogosis@smh.toronto.on.ca](mailto:gogosis@smh.toronto.on.ca).

# Notices and Events

**Translating New Technologies to Improve Public Health in Africa, Kampala, Uganda, May 15-20, 2008**

Part of the Keystone Symposia Global Health Series supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, this meeting will bring together a group of internationally recognized investigators who will provide practical insights for taking cutting edge concepts in the biosciences and applying them towards a better understanding of disease control in Africa. For more information, visit <http://www.kestonesymposia.org/Meetings/viewMeetings.cfm?MeetingID=930&subTab=program>

**2008 American Public Health Association Annual Meeting & Exposition, San Diego, California, October 25-29, 2008**

This event is the premier public health educational forum. The meeting theme "Public Health Without Borders" will explore transnational public health issues and provide a forum to address a range of topics including immigrant and refugee health, disease surveillance, and the international transmission of socio-cultural behaviors with adverse health implications. Advance registration opens May 27. For more information, visit <http://www.apha.org/meetings/>

**16th Annual Valley Aids Council (VAC) HIV/AIDS Update Conference, South Padre Island, Texas, October 29-31, 2008**

Sponsored by the Valley Aids Council (VAC), this meeting will provide an opportunity for an international exchange of ideas, collaboration and education to aid in the fight against HIV/AIDS. VAC is a private, non-profit organization which provides primary outpatient care and support services to men, women and children living with HIV/AIDS in South Texas. The deadline for abstracts is May 1, 2008. For more information, visit <http://www.valleyaids.org>