

C. ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACTS ON ARAB AMERICANS IN METROPOLITAN DETROIT

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The Environmental Impacts on Arab Americans in Metro Detroit project funded by the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (ES-10003) has raised environmental health awareness and reduced health impacts of environmental exposures among Arab Americans in Metropolitan Detroit through activities based on the specific aims of the project.

- A community council has been established and meets quarterly each year. The representatives of the community, healthcare providers, schools, and community and cultural organizations help guide the development of the project, designing community intervention and dissemination of research findings.
- A steering committee has been established and consists of the primary investigators, representatives of community-based organizations, academia, and Wayne County Health Department. The steering committee helps structure and direct the work of the community council, and in the hiring and training of bilingual community environmental health advocates.
- An external advisory committee meets yearly and provides valuable feedback and suggestions to the steering committee.
- A series of community workshops on environmental health have been held to build a capacity of community council members and other community members. In addition, a series of seven focus groups on environmental health and justice were held; the first of which is an Arab-American population. These focus groups, together with household assessments and other methods of assessing existing experience and knowledge within the community, were used to determine community priorities, de-

velop consensus within the community, and detect potential constraints to project implementation. A community action plan that includes a culturally appropriate household and community level intervention plan is being established. The priority community environmental health concerns have been identified as air pollution, respiratory illness, truck traffic, and truck exhaust, with the need for environmental education in general.

- A pilot project on disproportionate exposure to contaminants in the environment is ongoing and involves collecting toenail samples from 360 adults and children to monitor near-term exposure to pollutants.
- A household assessment has been completed in 617 households in four predominantly Arab-American neighborhoods in Metropolitan Detroit (neighborhoods in Dearborn, Detroit, Hamtramck, and Oak Park). Three waves of follow-up intervention visits to 200 “at-risk” households have been completed so far, emphasizing household environmental hazards and respiratory health.

A major aspect of this project is undertaking a process and impact evaluation that uses concerns brought up by the community to identify factors that facilitate or hinder implementing and the success of both the household and neighborhood components of an intervention program.

IMPACT ON PUBLIC HEALTH ISSUES

This project raised general awareness of environmental health concerns in the target community by creating a forum and discussing these topics and by implementing community workshops on

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ENVIRONMENTAL HEALTH, TOBACCO USE AND ITS CONTROL - *Hammad and Nriagu*

environmental health and other public awareness events. The project developed bilingual educational materials that enhance our efforts to educate the target community about environmental effects on public health. The bilingual household intervention has improved public health by educating participants about environmental risk factors and health outcome, with an emphasis on asthma triggers, and by making referrals for medical and other services as necessary. The community council helped develop plans to disseminate research results to study participants and other interested community members so they will be

aware of the impact of air pollution and indoor air on asthma. A bilingual brochure describing the Arab-American Environmental Health Project can be found in the ACCESS bilingual newsletter and assists in this process.

IMPACT ON POLICY ISSUES

The project jointly released an environmental justice analysis study of the Hamtramck medical waste incinerator, which brought attention to the problems (air quality effects and violations) of this incinerator, which disproportion-

ately affects a low-income, immigrant, mostly Arab population, and called for better air quality in the areas of the research (Dearborn, Hamtramck, Oak Park, and Detroit). Findings from our research also have been cited in our efforts to reduce emissions from local industries and a proposed freight terminal in the South Dearborn community.

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