

## O. SECTION IV SUMMARY

This Sections' abstracts and papers from the October 2003 biennial Arab-American Health conference clearly demonstrate how multiple disciplinary partnerships have successfully worked together over the last six years to address health issues within the Arab-American community of southeast Michigan. These works illustrate the concepts, strategies, structures, and many stakeholders that are needed for such research activities. These studies have demonstrated the considerable progress that has been made in establishing information on environmental exposures, the prevalence of environmental and tobacco-related diseases, the extent and character of tobacco use among young people, and, most importantly, a greater understanding of the diversity of individual values, perceptions, and health beliefs associated with these health-related issues. In addition, this information is beginning to be translated into the development and validation of new intervention strategies that include computer-based and written health communicative material and a tobacco cessation program that are all culturally appropriate to the needs of both an Arab-American and immigrant-based population.

A high level of awareness and perception as to the involvement of environmental exposures in causing or contributing to adverse health conditions was found within the community. However, priorities and opinions were found to vary considerably depending on location within the community, sex, and country of origin. Asthma as an environmental disease was considered to be

of major concern, but ear infections, chronic fatigue, and cancer were also linked to environmental exposures. Ambient environmental exposures that included traffic exhaust were considered to be of major concern, with less awareness of possible adverse exposures associated with workplace and home environments. Estimates for the costs of treating asthma within the Arab-American Community were very high. Studies illustrating the new approaches for assessing environmental burden on health by using risk indices were presented and should provide important information for the future development of culturally sensitive risk communication programs. Such activity will help individuals to understand and manage environmental health risks and exposures within their homes and places of work, as well as manage environmental diseases that they might have. In addition, by providing new data, the community will be empowered to advocate for reductions in ambient environmental pollution arising from both point and mobile sources within and around the community.

The prevalence and smoking habits of adolescents in the Arab-American community have been described, as has the testing of a tailored intervention. Preliminary findings suggest that Arab-American adolescents are more likely to smoke cigarettes if: 1) they were born in this country; 2) their peers and parents do; 3) they have been exposed to much advertisement; 4) if they report higher stress levels; and 5) if their self-esteem is low. Although the prevalence of cigarette smoking among the youths was

found to be less than that of non-Arab adolescents in Michigan, a very high level of narghile (water pipe) smoking was reported. Comparisons among Lebanese, Yemeni, and Iraqi adolescents indicated greater tobacco and narghile use among the Lebanese, along with considerably higher exposure levels to second-hand smoke. Further research is needed to determine the precise health risk exposure of smoking the narghile.

Delineating the predictors and linkages for tobacco use (whether cigarette or narghile smoking) are important areas for future investigation. These types of studies, together with ongoing and future investigations into the influence of stress on the health of recent immigrants, advertising, and peer pressure, are beginning to be used to design strategies to reduce smoking within the Arab-American Community.

In conclusion, the "Environmental Health" and "Tobacco Use and Control" sessions of this conference have demonstrated the exciting research activities that have developed as a result of continual growth in the collaborations between ACCESS and neighboring Michigan universities, namely Wayne State University and the University of Michigan. The completed and ongoing projects described have demonstrated full engagement of members of the Arab-American community. In addition to serving as exemplars of effective community-based health research, the results demonstrate a growing base of new knowledge and understanding from which further investigations with an increasing level of intervention program development and validation can be developed.