

## **Abstract for International Cancer Control Congress 2009**

### ***First Nations in Canada and Cancer Screening: addressing the needs of indigenous peoples***

There are 370 million indigenous peoples globally in over 70 countries. Where data is available, indigenous peoples generally suffer higher burdens of health problems and access to health services. Canada's First Nations populations are an example of this.

Cancer incidence is rising faster in First Nations than in the general Canadian population.[i] Cancer is now the leading cause of death in some First Nations and the third leading cause of death among Aboriginals across Canada[ii].

The current situation regarding screening for cancer in First Nations communities and as compared to other parts of Canada is largely unknown.

With funding from the Canadian Government, the Assembly of First Nations (AFN) undertook activities to determine how population-based cancer screening programs are implemented in First Nations communities in each province/territory. The comparison looked at participation rates, underlying factors influencing participation, barriers to access, best practices, forecasted future changes and identification of gaps in screening.

Phase one, *First Nations and Cancer Screening: Where are we now?*, encompasses both national and regional perspectives in two parts. Part A involves a national Literature Review and Part B includes individual regional reports. AFN regions were asked to answer six key questions pertaining to cancer screening in their specific area of Canada.

The next phase will include a thorough review, analysis and summary of the Literature Review and regional reports. AFN will build on this body of work to identify what needs to change and to explore options for policy change in screening and early detection and other measures in cancer control for First Nations.

The situation of lower rates of participation by First Nation citizens in cancer screening programs, lower overall health indicators, higher lifestyle risk factors and an increasing population all contribute to a rather volatile environment for First Nations and a potential cancer crisis.

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## **References**

Kliewer, E. *Cancer Risk Factors in Canadian Aboriginals*, Epidemiology and Cancer Registry, CancerCare Manitoba, November, 2005.

Health Canada 2003.