

Maternal-infant Child Health and Environment Research Symposium:
“How Local Research can Influence Policy and Practice”

Thursday, February 26th, 2009, 08:00-17:00 hrs
Maple Leaf Room, Lister Conference Centre, University of Alberta

Speaker Bio-sketch:

DR. IRENA BUKA, M.B.Ch.B., D.C.H.,F.R.C.P.C.
Clinical Professor of Paediatrics, University of Alberta
Paediatrician and Director of the Paediatric Environmental Health
Specialty Unit (PEHSU)
Child Health Clinic, Misericordia Community Hospital
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Dr. Irena Buka is a general paediatrician with over twenty years experience in active academic clinical practice. She has been a clinical teacher throughout this time. Her clinical interests include cleft lip and palate syndrome, asthma, neurodevelopmental disorders, among other general paediatric conditions. She is Director and co-founder of the Paediatric Environmental Health Specialty Unit (PEHSU) at the Misericordia Hospital, University of Alberta, which is currently the only one of its kind in Canada. The PEHSU collaborates with an international system of PEHSUs in the United States of America and Mexico.

Dr. Buka's research interests are in how the environment in its many aspects affects the health and development of children and she has published in the area of the health effects of air pollution on children, children's cancer and environmental linkages, lead levels in Canadian children, as well as an urban survey of health care professionals and parents / guardians concerns for the health of children from environmental factors.

Dr. Buka is currently serving on a consultative group for building capacity in health care professional training in paediatric environmental health with the World Health Organization. The group is creating educational tools and participating in their delivery at international conferences. She is also working with WHO in the area of Biomarkers and has a mutual interest in promoting an international reference laboratory for paediatric environmental health.

Dr. Buka is past Chair of the Expert Advisory Board for children's health and the environmental for the Commission for Environmental Cooperation under the North American Free Trade Agreement (NAFTA). She is also serving on the Canadian government led Advisory Group for Child Health and the Environment.

Dr. Buka is actively involved with developing an evidence based Maternal/Infant Paediatric Environmental Health Program as a partnership between the new School of Public Health, the Dept of Lab Med and the Department of Paediatrics, at the University of Alberta, which will include a clinical program, education and advocacy arms, all supported by a strong research program.

She is a contributor to the Paediatric Environmental Health 2nd Edition handbook of the American Academy of Paediatrics and is busy with her contribution to the Third Edition.

She looks forward to developing a strong Maternal/Infant Paediatric Environmental Health Program in Edmonton that could be replicated in other Universities across Canada. This would create a collaboration of evidence based Canadian Paediatric Environmental Health Clinics serving families with maternal/infant paediatric environmental health concerns.