

## INTERNATIONAL EPIDEMIOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION MEETING

**M**embers of the organising committee for "Health 2000: New Pathways in Epidemiology" — Sydney 1993 plan to deliver an outstanding international public health/epidemiology meeting which will address the major public health issues for the 1990s, the most significant accomplishments in public health and epidemiology in the 1980s, and public health in the next century.

The program aims to stimulate debate by highlighting progress in epidemiology, especially new pathways which have been followed recently. These pathways include genetic epidemiology, pharmacoepidemiology, disease surveillance, clinical epidemiology, applications in environmental health, nutrition, health services research, and veterinary and dental epidemiology.

Keynote speakers have been asked to formulate their presentations along two axes. The first, and the one with broad general appeal, would be a major topic such as asthma or cancer. The other would be the "new pathway" dimension, where they demonstrate how advances in relation to the major topic area have been made recently in epidemiology. With asthma, the presenter might expand on how the major epidemiologic advances in pharmaco-epidemiology — the "new pathway" — have improved the understanding, prevention and management of asthma.

With a cast including international health leaders, the program will address major concerns: cardiovascular disease, cancer, injury, environmental and maternal and child health, infectious disease, nutrition and substance abuse. Measuring efficacy and effectiveness of health services, research ethics, epidemiologic methods, setting goals and targets and epidemiology training programs will also feature. Opportunities will be made for public health professionals in training to present their work.

For further information, please contact the IEA Conference Secretariat, PO Box 746 Turramurra 2074. Telephone (02) 449 1525, fax (02) 488 7496.

## MEETING REVIEWS PROGRESS IN PHUs

Dr Sue Morey (Chief Health Officer), Dr Stuart Spring (CEO Northern Sydney Area Health Service) and Dr Owen Curteis (CEO Western Sydney Area Health Service) attended the meeting of Directors of Public Health Units (PHUs) at Royal North Shore Hospital. The forum provided an opportunity to review progress in PHUs around the State.

Dr Michael Levy summarised achievements in infectious disease. The new Public Health Act 1991 has seen a major revision of the list of notifiable conditions. The number of notifications has more than doubled in the past year as a result of a publicity campaign by the NSW Health Department and the new process of notification to, and response by, PHUs. Evaluation of the notification system is a priority. Dr Levy emphasised the value of the structure of public health services in NSW, which provides an efficient network for coordination of communicable disease control.

Dr Steve Corbett summarised achievements in environmental health. Activity has focused on environmental pollution, particularly water and air quality, lead and pesticides. The importance of working within a framework incorporating hazard identification, risk assessment, risk management and risk communication was emphasised. Most Areas and Regions are developing

environmental hazard profiles. The approach to intersectoral consultation taken in the Hunter Area was offered as a useful model for risk management.

The need for trend data for monitoring progress in health gain was stressed. The fact that most health indicators except suicide rates, are declining, has important implications for setting targets. Risk factor data are needed to monitor intermediate outcomes. The National Health Survey is not adequate to assess this at an Area/Regional level. The efforts of the Health Promotion and Epidemiology Branches of the NSW Health Department in pursuing a Statewide strategy for interval risk factor data collection were noted.

The concept of role delineation for PHUs was discussed. Although this approach may help to ensure a minimum level of public health service in each Area and Region, it may lead to confusion about the role of public health in the health system, which is not the same as those offering health care delivery. Each Area and Region should be striving to offer equivalent levels of public health services, because the services are population-based.

The role of PHUs in health services planning, development and evaluation to achieve the primary goals of the NSW health system, *viz.* improving health status, ensuring the delivery of appropriate health care services and ensuring value for money, was explored. The importance of a population perspective in decision-making at the Area and Regional Executive level was highlighted. The need for strategic planning to achieve improvements in health outcomes is a challenging area where PHUs should be able to make significant contributions in their respective Areas and Regions.

## FELLOWSHIP FOR RESEARCH OFFICER

Dr Bin Jalaludin, a research officer in the Western Sector Public Health Unit, has been awarded an NH&MRC Public Health Travelling Fellowship for 1992. The fellowship is awarded on a competitive basis and allows the recipient to travel overseas for several months to gain experience and training that is not available in Australia.

Dr Jalaludin, whose main interest is in environmental health, will spend three months in the United States working in the areas of quantitative risk assessment and environmental epidemiology.

## PUBLIC HEALTH EDITORIAL STAFF

The Bulletin's editorial advisory panel is as follows:

Dr Sue Morey, Chief Health Officer, Department of Health; Professor Stephen Leeder, Professor of Community Medicine, University of Sydney; Professor Geoffrey Berry, Professor of Epidemiology & Biostatistics, University of Sydney; Professor Ian Webster, Professor of Community Medicine, University of NSW; Dr Christine Bennett, Associate Director, Services Planning, NSW Health Department; Dr Michael Frommer, Epidemiologist, Epidemiology & Health Services Evaluation Branch; Ms Jane Hall, Research Officer, Department of Community Medicine, Westmead Hospital; and Mr Michael Ward, Acting Director, Strategic Marketing, NSW Health Department.

The editor is Dr George Rubin, Director, Epidemiology and Health Services Evaluation Branch, NSW Health Department.

Design — Health Public Affairs Unit, NSW Health Department.

Please send your articles, news, comments or letters to Dr George Rubin — Locked Bag 961, North Sydney NSW 2059 or Fax (02) 391 9232.

Suggestions for improving the reporting of infectious diseases are most welcome.