

# Session Abstracts

National Environmental Health Association (NEHA)  
71<sup>st</sup> Annual Educational Conference & Exhibition

## General Environmental Health

Thursday, June 21

8:30 – 9:20am

### **A Brief History of the Rise of the Sanitarian Profession: Influences of War, Politics, and Industrialization**

*Robert W. Powitz, PhD, MPH, RS, CFSP, DLAAS, Forensic Sanitarian, R.W. Powitz & Associates, PC, CT*

This presentation traces the beginnings of the sanitarian profession from the introduction of the word "sanitary" into our language through the emergence of the sanitary movement during the Mexican and Civil Wars. It continues to track the convoluted and fascinating emergence of our profession to the early 20th Century; culminating in the creation of a credentialed professional.

9:30 – 10:20am

### **Environment and Health—Making the Connection**

*Joel Coyne, REHS, Registered EH Specialist, Bernards Township Health Dept., NJ*

As public health professionals, we have been educated about the relationship between our living environment and our health. Although we are generally cognizant of the importance of protecting our natural surroundings, there is often a lack of conscious connection between public health, our daily activities, and the actual condition of our living environment.

This seminar explores the relationship between public health and ecosystem health, and how our everyday actions and activities impact and affect the health of our living environment and ourselves. It will also focus on ways to convey to the public the need to consider environmental impacts and resultant health effects at the individual, community and global levels. Developing increased awareness of these concepts and interconnections, we can better incorporate them into our personal lives, and integrate them into our professional activities.

10:30 – 11:20am

### **The Seven Most Important Things I've Learned in Environmental Health**

*Bob Custard, REHS, EH Manager, Alexandria Health Dept., VA*

In twenty years as an EH practitioner I have learned seven life changing truths:

- EH is not "rocket science", but common sense is not a common virtue. Effective EH means communicating simple, actionable messages in ways that change behaviors.
- Relationships are THE key to getting things done. Find great mentors. Build a network of professional contacts. Recruit excellence. Be a hero.
- Empower your community by educating your citizens about EH. Build partnerships.
- Challenge the bureaucracy, even if it means getting in trouble occasionally. Break the rules when it means doing the right thing.
- Live your passion. Don't just enforce regulations, solve problems. Leave a legacy by investing in the next generation of EH professionals.
- Professionalism matters because what we do matters. Every day we stake our reputation on what we do.
- Life is short. Take what you do seriously, but don't take yourself too seriously. Have fun. Make a difference.

1:00 – 1:50pm

### **Environmental Health in the "Broadest" Sense: Obesity and the Built Environment**

*Shari McMahan, PhD, Professor and Chair, Department of Health Science, California State University Fullerton, CA*

During the past 20 years, obesity among adults has risen significantly in the United States. Obesity and overweight are now common in American society. Obesity is highly correlated with the development of several chronic diseases, including cardiovascular disease and diabetes. Unless current eating and exercise habits change, one-third of all children born in the United States in 2000 will become diabetic. Obesity-related conditions kill an estimated 300,000 people per year in the United States.

Poor nutrition, physical inactivity, genetics and the built environment are factors that contribute to the obesity epidemic. The built environment includes urban design factors, land use, and available public transportation for a region, as well as the available activity options for people within that space. The built environment can both facilitate and hinder physical activity and healthful eating. This presentation will cover built environment strategies that help promote and encourage physical activity.

2:00 – 2:50pm

### **Innovative Land Use Planning and Design for Health and Climate Change**

*Karen Roof, Consultant, Kroof EnviroHealth Consulting, CO*

*Anne Bikle, MLA, Environmental Planner, Seattle-King County Public Health, WA*

Nationwide evidence shows that land use decisions can have significant impacts on the environment, chronic disease, and social health status. Many environmental public health professionals have taken the lead on this issue, in policy, built environment and climate change and innovative programs.

Case studies, examples, and strategies will be presented highlighting the work of some local health departments including details from Seattle-King County who are spearheading the effort to make health a more explicit and recognizable part of decisions involving land use, planning, design, environmental issues and climate change. The presentation will cover updating land use plans and policies, preparing climate plans, and conducting health impact assessment and more.

3:00 – 3:50pm

**Safe Body Piercing: Choosing the Safe Piercer**

*Gina M. Vallone-Hood, Environmental Manager, Florida Dept. of Health, FL*

The purpose of this presentation is to assist minors in making an informed decision when getting a body piercing. Body art is a growing industry with more and more people getting body piercings and tattoos. Due to age limitations minors seek alternative routes for obtaining piercings and tattoos. This presentation was created as a result of several minors having a classmate pierce their tongue on the school bus. These minors attended an alternative school, which contacted the department requesting a body piercing presentation, which was to be presented to all students attending the school.

This presentation provides an overview of the body piercing regulation in Florida, blood borne pathogenic diseases, and compares and contrasts the differences of getting pierced by a piercer who works in a licensed body piercing establishment versus an acquaintance.