

PHI Seminar Series Line Up 2017

*** All webinars will begin at 12PM on the date noted.*

January 11, 2017

Presenter: Wendy Pons

Title: Three key things all public health inspectors should know before inspecting small drinking water systems.

Abstract: In Ontario approximately 20% of the population gets their drinking water from a non-municipal drinking water source; these include small drinking water systems (SDWSs) which fall under the oversight of the Ontario Ministry of Health and Long-term Care and are inspected by public health inspectors. SDWSs are particularly vulnerable to contamination and create unique challenges for the PHIs that inspect these systems. These systems often face challenges related to having fewer protective measures in place than large systems, many are found in remote and isolated locations, the cost of operating a treatment system for a small number of consumers, poor access to operator training and low retention of knowledgeable operators.

The topics addressed in this presentation will assist the PHI in identifying and prioritizing protection efforts and education opportunities fundamental to improving the safety of SDWS, including outbreak trends, operator ability, training needs and factors related to SDWSs having positive *E.coli* test results.

Biography: Wendy Pons is currently working at the Region of Peel as the Supervisor of the vector borne disease team and has also taught a number of public health related courses at Ryerson University and the University of Guelph over the last 10 years.

Wendy became a certified public health inspector in 2005. She completed her Masters in Environmental Science and Management in 2008 and her PhD in Epidemiology in 2015. She has been conducting research related to small drinking water systems for the past 10 years and has published various papers and book chapters on the subject.

February 8, 2017

Presenter: Peter Pityn, PhD and Jim Anderson, MLT

Title: Misperceptions: Let's Take the "Myth-stery" Out of Mold

Abstract: The subject of mold exposures is highly controversial and poorly understood. Misperceptions abound. There are many practitioners in public health, professionals in the medical and scientific communities at large, and especially those in the general public, who believe that mold moves in mysterious ways, causing many different maladies. This belief is not based on fact and contributes to the "scary" connotation further perpetuating the mythology. We will explore some of the myths about "toxic black mold" and the factors that have given rise to these misperceptions while

attempting to differentiate fact from fiction and providing a balanced perspective of the real health issues associated with mold.

March 8, 2017

Presenter: Ofelia Tatar

Title: The Implementation of Admission Standards in Ontario's Class A Public Pools: An exploratory study

Abstract: Although currently not part of legislation, Admission Standards or child: guardian ratios for public pools are recommended by Ontario's Public Health authorities to be used as a means of preventing and reducing recreational water injuries by improving direct supervision of young children. To date, their voluntary and discretionary application by public pools operators has not been comprehensively evaluated. Therefore, the objective of this study was to explore the implementation of these Admission Standards in Ontario Class A public pools. An online survey was developed and disseminated to Class A public pool owners and/or operators. Descriptive statistics (i.e. frequency distributions) were used to report the results. All participating pools had Admission Standards integrated into their operations, with two thirds (68%) using a variety of child: guardian ratios that exceed the minimum recommendations, and over 50% using different combinations of at least nine other components (e.g. sorting of children by swimming ability). The challenges encountered by operators seem to be manageable, resulting in an overall positive impact on pool operations for more than 87% of cases. Further, there appears to be strong support for a legislated approach to Admission Standards from 78% of pools. The study's findings could be used by public pool operators, prevention leaders (e.g. Lifesaving Society) and policy makers, with the goal of reducing/preventing the burden of injury and illness related to recreational water use. While Admission Standards appear to be effectively implemented and to have a positive uptake, for conclusive results it is recommended that further research be conducted.

May 10, 2017

Presenters: Fatih Sekercioglu and Anne-Maria Quin

Title: Geared towards compliance: a regulatory training program for public pool and spa operators

Abstract: The relationship between health units and the operators, owners, lifeguards and support staff of public pools and spas can best be described as multi-dimensional. With a role that ranges from inspection and enforcement to training and support, the bond between public health inspectors and those who operate pools and spas is critical to ensuring that injuries and water-borne illnesses related to their use are prevented and reduced.

Understanding the regulatory requirements is just one component of the skill set necessary to allow operators, owners and other support staff to fulfill their roles and responsibilities in

maintaining safe and sanitary recreational water facilities. Health units can play a crucial role in providing regulatory-based education and training to facility staff.

The MLHU has been busy throughout 2015-2016 redeveloping and pilot testing their training program. The new, enhanced program is evidence-informed and comprehensive to meet the regulatory needs of the operator and other support staff. Invaluable operator and public health inspector feedback and best practice garnered from the literature have driven many positive changes in the way the program is administered. The goal of the program is to improve compliance with pool and spa legislation among pool and spa owners and operators in order to prevent or reduce the burden of water-borne illness and injury related to public pool and spa use.

Ultimately, public health, industry members and facility operators can act as partners in ensuring that public pools and spas are operated and maintained in a manner so as to protect the health and safety of patrons.

The webinar will highlight the approach the Middlesex-London Health Unit takes to provide regulatory training to public pool and spa operators. Key points include the importance of using evidence-informed, comprehensive methods, such as using adult learning principles and strategies that have been successful in other regulatory compliance programs.

Biography:

Fatih Sekercioglu, an Environmental Health Manager at the Middlesex-London Health Unit (MLHU), has played an instrumental role in shaping the way water facility operators receive regulatory training at the MLHU. He is currently pursuing a PhD at the University of Western Ontario.

Anne-Maria Quin, a Public Health Inspector, has played a pivotal role in developing the public pool and spa regulatory training program at the MLHU. She is currently pursuing a MPH at Waterloo University.

June 14, 2017

Presenter: Shannon Majowicz and Ken Diplock

Title: Food Safety in Ontario Youth: Knowledge, attitudes, and observed food handling practices

Abstract:

Introduction: High school youth represent a unique audience for interventions aimed at improving safe food handling and preparation. They are the age cohort immediately prior to the 'second weaning' phenomenon, a hypothesized increase in foodborne illness that occurs when those in their early 20's are cooking for themselves for the first time. They are also at an age when food preparation practices may not be fully established, such that appropriate teaching of safe food handling at this age may help instill lifetime safe food handling habits.

Purpose: The objective of this research was to determine the food safety knowledge, attitudes and practices in high school students in Ontario, Canada and determine whether these change after delivery of food safety training.

Methods: We administered a school-wide paper survey to the student body (n=2,860) of four Ontario high schools, and conducted an in-depth survey and observed a recipe preparation in Grade 10 and 12 food and nutrition classes in these schools (n=8 classes; n=119 students), to assess knowledge, attitudes, and self-reported and actual practices. We repeated the in-depth survey and recipe observation after providing food handler training.

Results: We found that, although food safety knowledge was generally low, most students felt confident they could prepare safe, healthy meals. Observed food handling scores were low at the start of the semester, with students following approximately 50% of the recommended safe food handling practices, but improved significantly after training. Overall, self-reported practices underestimated observed behaviours. For example, after retrieving raw chicken, only 26% of students washed their hands with soap and water, whereas, when asked, 77% of students reported always doing so. Because work and volunteer opportunities put students in contact with both the public and food, and because food safety practices are poor, this group is important to target for increased safe food handling education.

September 13, 2017

Presenters: Christine Kennedy, Robert Hart, Amanda McManaman, Sveto Milanopolus

Title: The Above Standard Housing Project: Exploring the Causes of Persistent Substandard Conditions in Low-Income Housing

Abstract: Housing plays an immense and complex role in shaping our physical, mental and social well-being. Access, condition, proximity to environmental hazards, and connectedness with the rest of the community are all factors that determine whether housing contributes to or detracts from human health.

Substandard housing conditions (e.g. dampness, mould, inadequate heating/cooling, pest infestations) are a subset of these factors that have been well established as contributing to adverse health effects. Public health has a long tradition of responding to individual concerns related to substandard housing. However, efforts to understand and collectively address the root causes of these concerns have been lacking.

In an attempt to move beyond this approach to substandard housing, GBHU has embarked on the multi-year *Above Standard Housing Project*. Aligned with the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, the project takes a multifactorial approach to the issues surrounding adverse physical housing conditions with a view to

- defining the type, magnitude and distribution of substandard housing conditions existing in Grey Bruce

- identifying challenges that hamper solutions for achieving broad-based above standard housing
- identifying strategies that could address these challenges

This presentation will describe the project's activities and findings to date.