

# 15th International Conference of the Pacific Basin Consortium for Environment and Health

This year the Pacific Basin Consortium (PBC) returned to its “spiritual home” at the East-West Center (EWC) for the 15<sup>th</sup> annual conference of the PBC. This saw a major strengthening of the relationship between the EWC and the PBC. The conference was opened by Dr. Charles E. Morrison, President of the East-West Center. Dr Morrison set the scene for active collaborations in the future.

## Conference Highlights

The attendance and active participation of Her Royal Highness Professor Dr Princess Chulabhorn Mahidol.

We are most grateful for the role Her Royal Highness plays in advocating for children’s environmental health in general and for the support Her Royal Highness has shown the PBC in particular. Her presentation in the opening plenary session entitled “The potential health impact of exposure to environmental pollutants in children.” set the scene for the remainder of the conference.

Presentation of the inaugural PBC Chairman’s Award.

The 2013 inaugural PBC Chairman’s Award was presented to Dr. William Suk. Peter Sly presented the award to Dr Suk, highlighting the major impact and contribution he has made to the PBC over the years.

Dr Suk has played a special role in the PBC and was instrumental in the transformation from the original Pacific Basin Consortium for Hazardous Waste Research & Management into the organization it is today. Dr Suk served as a member of the Board of Directors from 1996-2004 and the Chair of the Board of Directors from 2000-2004. In 1996 he organized the PBC meeting in Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia where he gave a plenary talk. The KL meeting had a primary focus on health and it was from here that the PBC shifted towards a more health-driven focus. Following this, Dr Suk organized a meeting in Manila on “Environmental Threats to the Health of Children”, which saw the introduction of Peter Sly to the PBC and was really the beginning of the focus we now all have on children’s environmental health. Dr Suk was also instrumental in involving David Carpenter with the PBC.

“Environmental Exposure in Indigenous Communities”

September 24-27, 2013

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## Conference Highlights (Continued)

To a very real extent the PBC as it is today reflects Dr Suk’s original vision as an organization that deals with toxic substances in an interdisciplinary fashion ranging from methods of remediation to studies of the health effects. The WHO program on e-waste that was officially launched at the PBC conference is a current day example of the hazardous waste problems included in the original brief of the PBC. This is just one example that highlights Dr Suk’s dedication to such issues and should give us all hope for the future.

The official launch of the World Health Organization’s project on the health effects of e-waste.

Dr Maria Neira, Director Public Health and Environment, WHO and Her Royal Highness Professor Dr Princess Chulabhorn Mahidol chaired the Plenary Session: the WHO project on e-waste which saw the project officially launched to the public. The PBC is proud to play an active role in this project and to host the official launch. More information about the project can be found on the website [<http://www.qcmri.uq.edu.au/chep/e-waste-network.aspx>].

The PBC’s collaboration with WHO was further strengthened in a session organized by Dr Nasir Hassan, Team Leader (Regional Adviser), Environmental Health in the WHO Western Pacific Regional Office, Manila. The session highlighted WHO programs and emerging issues in the Pacific Basin.

A CIHR hosted plenary session on Environmental Exposures in Indigenous communities.

The Canadian Institutes of Health Research Institute for Aboriginal Peoples’ Health sponsored and hosted a plenary session on Environmental Exposures in Indigenous Communities. Dr Malcolm King, scientific director of the institute organized and chaired this session which highlighted the vast issues resulting from adverse environments that face indigenous communities in various parts of the world.

Major symposia on traditional areas of interest

Many of the traditional areas of interest to the PBC were covered in various major symposia, including: arsenic, lead, hazardous waste management, bioremediation, water re-use and remediation and air pollution.



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### Student Engagement

A specific effort was made to engage and attract students to the 15th International Conference of the PBC. Three training workshops were held on:

Children’s Environmental Health presented in conjunction with WHO; Integrated Environmental Health Risk Assessment, sponsored by the Children’s Health and Environment Program at the University of Queensland; and Water Systems, Rural Areas and Indigenous Peoples, run jointly by the University of Arizona and the Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology.

A special student oral presentation was held and students also presented in the poster session.

Student prizes were awarded and presented to:

First Prize Cimi Ilmiawati, Jichi Medical University  
 Second Prize Arjun Venkatesan, Arizona State University  
 Third Prize Kongkea Phan, Gwangju Institute of Science and Technology.

The quality of student presentations was very high. The students and their institutions should be rightfully proud.

### The social and policy implications of environmental exposures.

In somewhat of a departure from tradition for the PBC, two sessions were devoted to the social implications and policy implications of environmental exposures. Todd Maiden, the PBC’s honorary legal counsel and long-time supporter ran a fascinating session on *Policy implications and responses to environmental exposures in the 21<sup>st</sup> century*. Raina Maier and Jim Field from the University of Arizona organised a session on *Developing a Framework for Socially Responsible Mining*. Both of these sessions created a lot of interest and we hope to see more sessions along these lines at future PBC conferences.

In closing the conference, Peter Sly, Chair, PBC Board of Directors thanked the East-West Center and meeting sponsors: AusAID; The National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences, CIHR Institute of Aboriginal Peoples’ Health and the Children’s Health and Environment Program, University of Queensland. Special thanks went to Nancy Lewis from the EWC, who was instrumental in bringing the PBC back to the EWC and Meg Dalmau, from Peter’s office and Carolyn Eguchi, from the EWC for all the work that they did before and during the conference.

