

Summary of Current Alaska Native Nutrition Research Projects

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Compiled by

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Please note: Any further use of this summary should be cleared with the principal investigators.

Following are several current research projects to investigate foods that Alaska Natives are consuming and the impact on their health. I've referred to project proposals, where available, to summarize the purpose of each project.

None of the studies include more than 13 communities. There are about 220 villages in Alaska, so although there are a variety of projects, there are still villages not included.

TITLE: Alaska Traditional Diet Project

AGENCY FUNDED: Alaska Native Health Board

FUNDED BY: US Agency for Toxic Substances and Disease Registry

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Mike Bradley, DVM

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SYNOPSIS: The project developed and is administering a comprehensive diet survey using a food frequency instrument in 13 villages, determining what and how much contaminants people are exposed to and the benefits and health effects associated with diet. Data are now being collected in this 2-yr. project. The food frequency is based on the best information currently available but the instrument has not been validated or replicated.

TITLE: Alaska Native Dietary and Subsistence Food Assessment Project (one of seven Native American Research Centers for Health grants awarded in Alaska)

AGENCY FUNDED: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

FUNDED BY: US Indian Health Service with National Institute of General Medical Sciences

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Anne P. Lanier, MD, MPH

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Tim Gilbert is the overall Principal Investigator

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SYNOPSIS: In collaboration with Alaska Native organizations, this methodological investigation will develop a dietary assessment instrument and enhance nutrient database information on Native foods, thus enabling future investigations to more accurately evaluate the effect of the diet including traditional Alaska Native foods on chronic diseases. Six communities in each of two regions are being selected to participate in this 4 year study which will collect 24 h recalls in four seasons to determine current eating

practices, analyze foods for nutrients, and ultimately develop and validate a food frequency instrument useful in the two regions.

TITLE: Diet and Nutrition Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices of Alaska Natives (one of three grants part of the Centers of Biomedical Research Excellence (COBRE/CANHR)

AGENCY FUNDED: University of Alaska Fairbanks Institute of Arctic Biology

FUNDED BY:

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kari Hamrick, Ph.D., R.D.

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(Other components under Gerald Mohatt, Bert Boyer, and Kelly Hazel)

SYNOPSIS: Purpose is to evaluate the dietary pattern, nutrient intakes, and food sources of Alaska Natives to improve the understanding of the nutritional value of subsistence foods. A secondary objective is to determine the prevalence of overweight and associated behavioral factors such as body image, knowledge and attitude toward diet practices and weight management strategies. Villages are being identified for this multi-year study.

TITLE: Influence of maternal nutrition on pregnancy and infant outcomes in Alaska Native populations

AGENCY FUNDED: Alaska Native Tribal Health Consortium

FUNDED BY: US Indian Health Service with National Institute of General Medical Sciences (another NARCH grant)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Kari Hamrick ankjh@uaa.alaska.edu

SYNOPSIS: The objective of this prospective cohort study is to investigate the influence of maternal nutrition on pregnancy and infant outcomes in Alaska Native populations. Three-day food intake data will be obtained from pregnant women who are participating in the Maternal Cord Blood Monitoring Program in three regions.

TITLE: A Prospective Study of Alaska Natives and American Indians

A cohort study of American Indians and Alaska Natives health issues including a nutrition component

AGENCY FUNDED:

FUNDED BY:

ALASKA CONTACT: Anne P. Lanier, M.D., M.P.H.
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SYNOPSIS: A cohort study is in the design phase.

TITLE: Dietary Benefits and Risks in Alaskan Villages

AGENCY FUNDED: Aleutian/Pribilof Islands Association, Inc.

FUNDED BY: National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS)

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: Michael Brubaker mikeb@apiai.com

SYNOPSIS: With a focus on the villages of Atka and St. Paul, this project addresses dietary questions raised by native people living in villages throughout Alaska. What are the risks associated with environmental contaminants bio-accumulating in traditional foods, and how do they compare with the health, social, economic and cultural consequences which result from a shift to alternative, market-based diets? This project establishes a model for addressing dietary concerns and demonstrates methods for increasing village-based leadership and cooperation between communities, researchers, and government agencies. The project will result in new data which will be compared with existing village-specific data to better understand and communicate the benefits and risks associated with rural diet.

TITLE: The Inuit Diet and Health Study

AGENCY FUNDED: not yet funded

FUNDED BY:

PRINCIPAL ORIGINATORS: Peter Bjerregaard, Eric Dewailly, T Kue Young, Sven Ebbesson

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SYNOPSIS: A long term study is proposed to give reliable dietary advice based on knowledge of what causes disease among the Inuit in three countries and in particular about the effects of the traditional diet and lifestyle. Approximately 12,000 Inuit/Yupik people from Alaska, Canada and Greenland will be recruited, interviewed, examined and have blood drawn to begin the study. Participants will be followed for maybe 20 or 30 years. As of June 2002 the study outline was being taken to the Inuit Circumpolar Conference (ICC) and other Indigenous groups for review.

Other Studies are being conducted where the primary focus is not diet, but where dietary information is being collected. For example;

TITLE: Genetics of Coronary Artery Disease in Alaskan Natives (GOCADAN)

AGENCY FUNDED: Medlantic Research Institute in partnership with Norton Sound Health Corporation

FUNDED BY: NIH

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: David C. Robbins, M.D.

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SYNOPSIS: The project's aims are to carefully document CVD and CVD risk factors among 1200 Alaska Natives using a cross-sectional study design which includes interviews, physical exams, laboratory measurements and other measures. This five-year project began in 1999.