

TRACKING TRIBUNE

TRACKING PROGRAM WINS TWO AWARDS

In January 2014, CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program was recognized for two separate achievements at the NCEH/ATSDR Honor Awards Ceremony. The "Tracking in Action" video series was awarded "Excellence in Communications" for setting itself apart from other communications products with its high-caliber production quality, variety of content, dynamic videography, and plain language scripting focusing on the positive impact of the Tracking Network on environmental health. The Tracking Program also received an award for "Excellence in Information Technology" for the National Environmental Public Health Tracking Network and its unique design approach to environmental public health and surveillance systems. Both awards highlight the Tracking Program's efforts in developing innovative tools, developing new technologies, and keeping the public informed, safe, and healthy.

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ASTHO FELLOWSHIP 5-YEAR ANNIVERSARY

Since 2009, the Association of State and Territorial Health Officials (ASTHO) has partnered with CDC's Environmental Public Health Tracking Program to offer mentorship opportunities through a peer-to-peer fellowship program. This innovative program pairs existing CDC-funded environmental public health tracking grantees with fellows from state or local health departments not currently funded by the CDC tracking program. The fellowship fosters collaboration between health departments through knowledge sharing and the development of pilot projects to positively impact environmental health.

Twenty-three state and local health departments have participated in the program in the last five years. The pilot projects launched through this initiative vary in size and scope and include projects like tracking algal blooms, preventing heat-related deaths, and linking environmental exposures and cancer risk. To mark the five-year anniversary of this important program, ASTHO has released *Tracking Progress, Improving Health*, a report that chronicles the history of the program and its many accomplishments.

This year, ASTHO and CDC's Tracking Program welcome four returning participants in the fellowship program. Arizona, Kansas, Kentucky, and North Carolina will all be acquiring and submitting hospital discharge data to the Tracking Network related to asthma, carbon monoxide poisoning, heart attacks, and heat stress illnesses for the 10-year period of 2000-2010. CDC's Tracking Program is tremendously proud of the results of the fellowship program and its ongoing partnership with ASTHO.



TRACKING MATTERS

INNOVATION

CDC's Tracking Network continues to develop new and innovative tools to make environmental and health connections easier to understand. Outdoor air quality is one of the most searched content areas on the Tracking Network. Outdoor air quality can impact respiratory and cardiovascular health, among others such as low birthweight and other reproductive outcomes. To highlight the effect of outdoor air on cardiovascular disease, the Tracking Network now provides a new health impact assessment tool that estimates the number of coronary artery disease deaths that could be prevented by lowering PM2.5 (particulate matter) levels by certain percentages. You can use the tool to see how many lives can be potentially saved if there were a five, ten, or fifteen percent reduction in PM2.5 levels in the continental United States.

THREE IS THE KEY TO UNLOCKING HOSPITAL DISCHARGE DATA

By Environmental Public Health Tracking EIS Officer

Hospital Discharge Data and the Tracking Network

Hospital discharge data (HDD) are a valuable source of health outcomes data for the Tracking Network. Every year, Tracking Program grantees share de-identified HDD for asthma, heart attack, carbon monoxide poisoning, and heat stress health effects on the Tracking Network for free, public use.

Periodic evaluation of surveillance systems and data is necessary to ensure systems are operating efficiently and effectively. In 2013, the Tracking Program's EIS officer took the lead on evaluating HDD submitted during the period of 2000-2010 and assessing the timeliness and completeness of reporting.

Improved Data Collection Policy to Balance Timeliness and Accuracy

The three most important results affecting HDD timeliness and completeness of reporting were:

1. Some grantees were able to submit HDD every year, especially for more recent years.
2. In other cases, the number of closed and reported HDD records continued to be updated for up to five years after the original data was submitted.
3. Annual resubmission of the previous three years of HDD, including updates to original data, would help ensure the data are timely and accurate.

The Tracking Program recommends a three-year data resubmission policy to standardize timing and volume of data resubmission across all Tracking Network grantees.

Hospital discharge data can be joined with environmental exposure data and used for trend analyses over time at county and state levels. Despite current limitations, HDD remains a useful health outcomes data source for the Tracking Network.