

# poster ABSTRACT



## TITLE

EPHT Environmental Health Awareness Survey

## THEME

Disseminate Credible Information to Guide Policy, Practice and Other Actions to Improve the Nation's Health

## KEYWORDS

survey, risk communication, education

## BACKGROUND

Practitioners and researchers report that public perceptions and beliefs about environmental health risks are different from the perceptions and beliefs of agency representatives. Little scientific research has been done to gauge the public's understanding of basic environmental health concepts. Practitioners rely on their own assumptions and experience to decide how, or at what level, to focus environmental health education and outreach. EPHT staff obtained data about baseline knowledge and beliefs among New Yorkers related to basic concepts of hazard; exposure, exposure pathway, dose, and risk; and acute and chronic health effects and latency.

## OBJECTIVE(S)

To get information about how New Yorkers understand key, basic environmental health concepts before additional EPHT outreach materials are developed.

## METHOD(S)

An in-person, self-administered, eight-question survey was conducted at 13 locations in the state from April to November 2004. Locations were selected to obtain a sample that approximated the demographics of the U.S. Census for New York State. The survey recorded both substantive and demographic data (age, gender, education and race). A mid-course review was performed. Five hundred and five (505) surveys were obtained. Results were analyzed using statistical software and qualitative techniques.

## RESULT(S)

Survey results showed significant differences between agency messages and public understanding of basic, fundamental environmental health concepts (i.e. environmental health and exposure). Findings transcended demographic categories.

## DISCUSSION/RECOMMENDATION(S)

Education about basic environmental health concepts is needed before reporting on EPHT projects that involve hazard and exposure databases, improved data linkages and/or surveillance systems. Practitioners need to bridge the knowledge gap in order to provide a better foundation for the public's use and interpretation of environmental public health tracking information.



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