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## The Alaska Epidemiology *Bulletin* Celebrates 50 Years of Public Health Impact

This year marks the 50th anniversary of the inaugural publication of the Alaska *Epidemiology Bulletin*. Originally known as the *Communicable Disease Bulletin*, this publication served as a pioneering platform for disseminating important updates on public health issues affecting Alaskans. On January 25, 1974, its debut edition featured updates on diphtheria in Southeast Alaska, a hepatitis epidemic in Barrow, and influenza activity statewide. As we commemorate this milestone, we celebrate the resilience and dedication of Alaska's public health partners in safeguarding the health and well-being of its residents over the past half-century.

Over the years, the *Bulletin* evolved in both scope and title. On January 7, 1983, it was renamed the *Epidemiology & Communicable Disease Bulletin* when the Section of Communicable Disease was merged with the Epidemiology Office and renamed the Section of Epidemiology. On August 26, 1983, the bulletin adopted the more succinct title of *Epidemiology (Epi) Bulletin*, which signified a broader platform for reporting on both communicable and non-communicable issues of public health importance. On June 24, 1984, the familiar masthead of the bulletin was first used. The masthead was designed by an Anchorage high school student, Alexander Dubie, who was hired by the Section of Epidemiology after winning an award for design.

Loosely patterned after the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's Morbidity and Mortality Weekly Report (CDC MMWR), the *Epi Bulletin* has been instrumental in providing timely and actionable insights into emerging health threats, outbreaks, disease trends, and other issues of public health importance. Through collaboration with partners such as CDC's Arctic Investigations Program, tribal partner organizations, the University of Alaska, and many others, the *Epi Bulletin* has evolved into a trusted resource for public health information, recommendations, and guidance that is timely, evidence-based, and Alaska-specific.

Most *Epi Bulletins* are written to read like extended medical journal abstracts in a format familiar to clinicians, often with at least one table or figure. They are typically limited to one page (single-sided) to assure brevity and can be posted on a bulletin board for clinic or hospital staff to read quickly. Historically, the *Epi Bulletin* has been formatted for 8.5" x 14" paper to allow for more content to be included on the page; however, they are printable on 8.5" x 11" paper as well. Some *Bulletins* are multi-page articles entitled *Recommendations and Reports (RnRs)* to provide a venue for more lengthy, in-depth articles.

The diverse array of topics published in the *Epi Bulletin* reflects the multifaceted nature of public health in Alaska. Examples of topic areas covered by the *Epi Bulletin* include the following:

- **Chronic Diseases:** Reports have encompassed conditions like cancer, diabetes, heart disease, mental health disorders, obesity, and respiratory diseases, with a focus on risk factors, prevention efforts, and disparities in disease burden.
- **Emergency Preparedness and Response:** Reports have included preparedness efforts for public health emergencies such as bioterrorism threats, mass casualty incidents, natural disasters, and pandemics, as well as response efforts and lessons learned from past events.
- **Environmental Health:** Reports have included environmental contaminants (e.g., lead, mercury, persistent organic pollutants, and air pollutants) climate change impacts on health, and the health effects of natural disasters such as earthquakes and wildfires.
- **Health Equity and Social Determinants of Health:** Reports have focused on factors such as education, housing, access to

health care, poverty, systemic racism, and advocating for policies and interventions to address health disparities and promote health equity.

- **Infectious Diseases:** Reports have covered infectious disease outbreaks, emerging threats, and the epidemiologic characterization of a wide range of pathogens and associated diseases (e.g., emerging antibiotic-resistant pathogens, COVID-19, human immunodeficiency virus, influenza, sexually transmitted infections, tuberculosis, vaccine-preventable diseases, viral hepatitis, and many more), providing insights into trends, risk factors for illness, prevention strategies, diagnostics, and treatment.
- **Injuries:** Reports have covered various mechanism of injury such as bear maulings, domestic violence, falls, firearm-related injuries, motor vehicle crashes, and suicides, as well as various outcomes resulting from these events like burns, deaths, drownings, hospitalizations, and traumatic brain injuries.
- **Maternal and Child Health:** Reports have covered issues such as birth outcomes disparities among different racial and ethnic groups, infant safe sleep practices, prenatal care utilization, and the impact of adverse childhood experiences on long-term health.
- **Substance Abuse:** Reports have covered trends in substance use disorders, overdose deaths, harm reduction approaches, access to treatment and recovery services, and the impact of substance abuse on families and communities.
- **Vital Statistics:** Reports have provided insights into demographic trends, infant mortality rates, leading causes of death, life expectancy, and disparities in health outcomes based on factors such as race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, and geographic location.

As we look to the future, the Alaska Division of Public Health is committed to ensuring that the *Epi Bulletin* continues to serve as a vital resource for timely dissemination of critical public health information to Alaska clinicians and other stakeholders. Considerations are underway for updating the masthead and making *Epi Bulletins* available in an html format. Through ongoing collaboration and innovation, we will build upon the legacy of the past 50 years to address the evolving challenges facing Alaska's public health landscape.

We extend gratitude to all those who have contributed to the success of the *Epi Bulletin* over the years, including dedicated public health practitioners, scientists and researchers, clinicians, and community leaders. We would like to offer special appreciation to Dr. John Middaugh, who inherited the primary responsibility for editing the bulletin in 1975 -- a responsibility that he held for more than 25 years during his career as Alaska's State Epidemiologist.

### Recommendations

1. If you would like to publish your work in the *Epidemiology Bulletin*, please contact one of our editors directly, email [epibulletins@alaska.gov](mailto:epibulletins@alaska.gov), or call 907-269-8000.
2. All Alaska clinicians, public health practitioners, health scientists, and other stakeholders are strongly encouraged to sign up to receive *Epi Bulletins* at: [https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDHSS/subscribe/new?topic\\_id=AKDHSS\\_13](https://public.govdelivery.com/accounts/AKDHSS/subscribe/new?topic_id=AKDHSS_13)
3. If you have found the *Epi Bulletin* to be a helpful resource, please encourage your colleagues to [sign up](#) as well.
4. Go to the following website (available from the [SOE homepage](#)) to access archived *Epi Bulletins*: <https://health.alaska.gov/dph/Epi/Pages/bulletins/default.aspx>