

IUCH Board report 2015-18

In 1981, the IUCH was formally established as a unique entity at the 5th International Congress on Circumpolar Health held in Copenhagen, Denmark. The IUCH is a non-profit organization incorporated in the State of Alaska. Thus the IUCH is a multilateral scientific union, which strives to contribute to the growing body of scientific medical and public health research data for the circumpolar regions and globally. IUCH is an observer to the Arctic Council.

Members are individual members of the five circumpolar scientific societies; the Danish-Greenlandic Society for Circumpolar Health; the Nordic Society for Circumpolar Health; the Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health; the American Society for Circumpolar Health; and the Russian Academy of Polar Medicine

Board members

The Board has 2015-18 consisted of the following:

- President: Anders Koch (Danish-Greenlandic Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Vice-President: Mikhail Voevoda (The Russian Academy of Polar Medicine and Extreme Human Ecology)
- Secretary: Jon-Øyvind Odland (Nordic Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Treasurer: Brenna Simons (American Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Suzanne Møller (Danish-Greenlandic Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Arja Rautio (Nordic Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Jon Petter Stoor (Nordic Society for Circumpolar Health – member at large)
- Gwen Healey (Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Michael Jong (Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Philippe Amtislavski (American Society for Circumpolar Health)
- Abbie Willetto Wolfe (American Society for Circumpolar Health – member at large)
- Lyubomir Aftanas (The Russian Academy of Polar Medicine and Extreme Human Ecology)

Brenna Simons was, by February 2018, replaced by Abbie Willetto Wolfe as treasurer, due to change of job that made the treasurer position incompatible with that.

By tradition, a representative from the society that organizes the next ICCH conference will hold the IUCH President position in the term leading up to the conference. A representative from the society that organizes the following conference, will hold the Vice President position.

For the sake of continuation, the IUCH Board has decided to have the president from the preceding term continue as a Past President, aimed at providing support for the local planning committee of the next congress.

Meetings

The Board has held seven meetings, two face-to-face meetings in conjunction with other events in Oulu and Nuuk 2015 and 2016; four telephone conference meetings during the period, and one face-to-face meeting in December 2017 in Copenhagen, Denmark. It was decided that more face-to-face meetings would be too heavy for the budget. Six members of the board participated in the face-to-face meeting in Copenhagen.

IUCH tasks

In the following, specific items handled by the IUCH board in the term 2015-18, will be described.

ICCH congresses

The main objective of the IUCH is to be the overall organizer of the ICCH conferences. The IUCH does not, at such, sponsor the ICCH congresses that shall be economically self-contained. However, the ICCH congresses may partially rely on funds from the IUCH, e.g. in case of expenses given as loans prior to any income for the conference. For that reason, it is important that the IUCH keeps a stable sum of money to guarantee the triannual ICCH conferences.

The IUCH board has followed the ICCH preparations closely, including carried out an inspection visit at the site for the ICCH17 conference in Copenhagen in December 2017. The IUCH board was involved in program details including approval of the scientific and social program.

The IUCH board has decided that for the sake of sparing finances no financial means (e.g. travel support) will be given from the IUCH to Hildes award recipients as was given in the past. Neither will the IUCH/ICCH conferences pay the so far fixed amount per conference participant to the Jens Peder Hart Hansen Memorial Fund (JPHHMF). Instead, these fees may be used for further securing of the IUCH financial basis. However, negotiations will take place between the IUCH Board and the JPHHMF of how the IUCH/ICCH Congresses may support the Jens Peder Hart Hansen awards in the future.

The IUCH Board has decided to require progress reports every 6 months from the ICCH organizing committees and to pay an inspection visit to the site at least 18 months prior to the next congress, including seeing and approving of the venue for the last congress.

International Journal of Circumpolar Health (IJCH)

The IUCH supports the IJCH through an institutional membership of the Network of Circumpolar Health Researchers that through the International Association of Circumpolar Health Publishers, the organization behind the IJCH. For the sake of reducing fixed costs for the IUCH the IUCH board in the term 2015-18 decided to pay 1300 € per year to support the IJCH, not the full institutional membership-fee of 5000 €.

Working groups

A number of working groups have been formed under the IUCH. A complete list can be found at the iuch.net. Working groups are free to take part in and are as such open to all. Activities are highly varying from quite active within the field of infectious diseases to other groups that may in effect be non-working. Such groups rely on the members' interest only. Funding of a very limited size (e.g. lunch etc.) may be obtained from the IUCH for face-to-face meetings in the working groups.

State of the working groups will be updated in the term after the ICCH17 conference.

Formation of two new working groups will be suggested during the ICCH17 congress: a working group on the Built Environment (suggested by Philippe Amtislavski) and a Mother and child network (suggested by Ruth Montgomery-Andersen).

Educational activities

The IUCH board has joined with the Network of Circumpolar Health Researchers, the Nordforsk supported Climate Changes and Infectious Disease project (CLINF) and the University of Copenhagen to form a three-days PhD course in Research Methods in Circumpolar Areas that takes place immediately after the ICCH conference in August, 2018. In addition, the IUCH supports a Summer School in Arctic Health, also in August 2018 held by the University of Copenhagen, and a PhD course arranged by UArctic in June 2018 in Nuuk, Greenland ('Research cohort, reproduction and environmental health. Community involvement, population trends across the arctic, multidisciplinary research').

The IUCH board has discussed to initiate and host webinars on circumpolar health on its website to facilitate E-Learning. A short range of webinars have been produced by the University of Copenhagen that are planned to be put on the IUCH website to initiate the process.

International collaboration

The IUCH is an observer at the Arctic Council (AC). In the fall of 2015 the IUCH was required to submit a report on the possible interest of the IUCH in remaining an observer and what projects the IUCH have or plan that fall under the AC umbrella. Such a report was made stressing the continued interest, and how the IUCH could support the AC, in particular through the collaboration with the Arctic Human Health Expert Group (AHHEG) and the Sustainable Development Working Group (SDWG). Subsequently, the IUCH has remained an observer to the AC.

The AC observer status includes that the IUCH is invited to send two representatives to AC meetings (at own costs). To save finances, it was decided that one representative could go; that the given person should, as a rule, live in the given country of the chairmanship to save travel money; and that only meetings of interest to human health would be attended. In this term, the IUCH has been present at three AC meetings in Fairbanks and Juneau, Alaska, and in Oulu and Levi, Finland. At all meetings the IUCH has, in fact, been represented by two members, as IUCH Board member Arja Rautio, as a member also of the AC AHHEG, has been funded from other sources. The IUCH representatives have taken part in discussions with focus on human health.

A non-legally, non-binding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has been made between the IUCH and the University of the Arctic (UArctic) under the Arctic Council. The details of the areas of collaboration will be specified later in an annex to the MoU. One of such areas should be teaching activities, such as PhD courses in relation to the ICCH congress or other separate PhD courses (like Nuuk, June 2018).

The IUCH is a member of the Network of Circumpolar Health Researchers. In the past IUCH Board terms, there have been various discussions on closer collaboration between the Network and the IUCH. These discussions continue.

Newsletter

A yearly newsletter to members and possible other interested persons or institutions has been discussed. This work will continue in the next IUCH Board term.

Website

The IUCH website is good, but needs constant update. The intention is to make this website a favorite entry to circumpolar health.

Financial situation

A specific report will be given by the treasurer. One thing in particular was important to the financial situation 2015-18: The only income of the IUCH is a fixed fee for each ICCH conference participant. However, for legal reasons the ICCH16 conference in Oulu, Finland, was not able to submit the usual fee for congress participants. Therefore, the IUCH did not have any income for the 2015-18 term. A main priority for the board was therefore to spend as little as possible of the IUCH funds during the term.

As the ICCH conference fees is of utmost importance to the IUCH, it has been decided that future ICCH congress organizers shall guarantee payment of the fee to the IUCH prior to the conference. If this is not possible, another circumpolar society will be given the task to arrange the conference.

ICCH Bylaws

According to the different items above, the ICCH bylaws need modification. This will take place in the next term following the discussions.

Finally, I wish to thank the Board members for a fruitful and positive collaboration in the IUCH term 2015-18.



Anders Koch, IUCH President, August 14, 2018