Proposed Research Initiative -

Collaborative Minority Health and Health Disparities Research with Tribal Epidemiology Centers

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NIH Tribal Consultation Advisory Committee March 9, 2017



Objective

To support collaborative research between Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs) and external investigators on topics related to minority health and health disparities in Al/AN populations.

- 5.4 million individuals self-identify as American Indian/Alaska Native (AI/AN)
- > 567 federally registered tribes
- AI/AN populations as a whole experience significant disparities in a range of diseases and health conditions
- Premature mortality has increased among AI/AN populations in last 15 years while decreasing in other US racial/ethnic minority populations
- Significant gaps in knowledge regarding health of AI/AN populations
 - Aggregate data obscure significant heterogeneity
 - Al/AN individuals often not represented in national surveys or epidemiological studies, not analyzed, or included in 'other' category



- Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TECs) ideally positioned to contribute to evidence base and published research literature
- Established in 1996 under the re-authorization of the Indian Health Care Improvement Act (IHCIA)
- Funded as 5-year cooperative agreements by the Indian Health Service (IHS) along with other federal agencies (CDC, NIH, OMH)



12 TECs nationwide, generally under the umbrella of Indian Health Board or Tribal Health Consortium

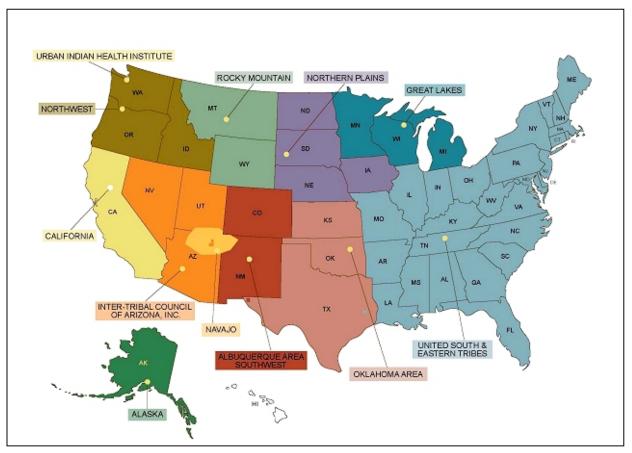


Figure 1. Location of Tribal Epidemiology Centers (TEC). https://www.ihs.gov/epi/index.cfm?module=epi_tec_tecs



- Mission of TECs is to serve public health data needs
 - Collection and analysis of health surveillance data
 - Maintenance of patient registries
 - Implementation and evaluation of public health interventions and public awareness campaigns
 - Mobilization of response to public health emergencies
 - Prioritization of public health status objectives
 - Generation of recommendations for targeting and/or improving health care services



- > TECs have infrastructure to conduct research
 - Community partnerships
 - Avenues for gathering stakeholder perspectives
 - Access to local health data
- Research has not been a primary function
 - Mission focuses on serving local public health data needs
 - TECs vary in availability and expertise of staff to conduct research
 - Some TECs have collaborated on NIH-funded research



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A trans-NIH initiative to support collaborative research between TECs and external investigators, with a particular emphasis on areas where there are significant gaps in data and knowledge for AI/AN populations.

- Partnerships to support community responsive, scientifically rigorous projects with findings disseminated to local stakeholders, IHS, and the scientific community
- Applicant organization may be TEC organization or institution of external researchers
- Projects may be observational or intervention studies but must use data that are/have been collected by the TEC
- Pooling or comparison of data across TECs strongly encouraged



Examples of potential projects:

- Projects to understand or prevent accidental deaths, chronic liver disease and cirrhosis, suicide, or other causes of premature mortality in AI/AN populations
- Projects to understand similarities and differences in health risks, protective factors, and health outcomes within or across TEC catchment areas
- Projects to understand similarities and differences in health outcomes in AI/AN compared to non AI/AN populations living within the same geographic region
- Rigorous evaluation of TEC-led public health interventions or health awareness campaigns
- Projects to develop and test methods for research with small populations to better understand AI/AN health



Potential for building capacity:

- Opportunities for TEC personnel to gain experience preparing NIH grant applications and conducting NIHfunded research
- Engagement of community stakeholders in research process
- Generation of baseline or preliminary data for future research

Collaboration and input:

- Consultation with IHS and NIH Tribal Health Research Office
- Listening session with TEC Directors
- NIDA, NIEHS, NHLBI, NCI, NIAAA have expressed interest in participating
- Concept approved by NIMHD Advisory Council Feb 2017

