

IPHA Annual Meeting History Dr. Ronald Eckoff

The Annual Meeting has long been a highlight of the Iowa Public Health Association's (IPHA) year. In one of the early planning meetings regarding the 85th Anniversary of IPHA, Tom O'Rourke of Black Hawk County commented on the importance of the annual meeting for education, networking and inspiration. I decided to review the annual programs archive from 1930-1989 to capture the flavor of the forty-six meeting programs on hand.

Do you remember your first IPHA meeting? Was there a particular speaker at an IPHA meeting that captured your attention? Have you met a coworker from another agency that has become a long term colleague that you regularly communicate with? Would you be willing to share a brief story about an IPHA meeting that had a major impact on you? We would like to add as many stories as possible to our 85th Anniversary publication.

I remember a luncheon speaker from an annual meeting in the 1970s. He was from Stevens Point, Wisconsin. His theme was wellness and what a poor job we do in promoting our story. He was introduced, stood up, and proceeded to floss his teeth before he started speaking. He said his wife told him it was gross to do that in public. He said he understood it was socially unacceptable, but it was a healthful habit after eating, as opposed to cigarette smoking, which was socially acceptable, but very unhealthy. His presentation then focused on promoting healthy lifestyles.

We have abstracts of the presentations at several of the Annual Meetings in the 1930s. The lead presentation at the 1930 meeting was: "What Preventable Diseases are Costing Iowa" by Henry Albert, M.D., Commissioner of the State Department of Health. The paper indicated that the following deaths could be prevented: 99% of typhoid fever, 90% of diphtheria, 80% of tuberculosis, 70% of diarrhea and enteritis for infants, 15% of cancer, 30% of heart disease and other diseases of the circulatory system, and 70% of puerperal fever. Unfortunately, Dr. Albert was not able to present the paper due to having surgery for acute appendicitis the day before the conference started. He died four days later at age 52.

Other presentations focused on: reports on five recent outbreaks of typhoid fever, four milk borne and one food borne and tourist camp sanitation. Dr. D.C. Steelsmith, who became acting commissioner on Dr. Albert's death, and was the first president of IPHA, presented on the recently passed County Health Services Law. He listed twelve activities of full time county health units and twelve advantages over the system of each city, town, and township being responsible for public health.

The most common topic during the 1930s was venereal disease and in 1937 the meeting was called a Syphilis Symposium and Convalescent Serum Symposium. Syphilis and gonorrhea were the only diseases covered.

The 1941 meeting was held May 8-9, seven months before the attack on Pearl Harbor with a focus on national defense issues. One paper was: "Nutrition in National Defense" by P. Mabel Nelson, Head of the Department of Foods and Nutrition at Iowa State. Another was a panel moderated by Reginald Atwater, M.D., Executive Secretary of the APHA with the topic: "Maintaining an Intact Local Health Service - A Problem of National Defense." The Medical Director of General Motors Corporation discussed the "Importance of Tuberculosis Control in National Defense Industries." Henry Mustard, M.D., Director of the DeLamar Institute of Public Health at Columbia University discussed "Public Health Problems in National Defense."

In meetings toward the end of the war and shortly after there were numerous presentations about lessons learned from the war zone.

On January 11, 1964, the first Surgeon General's Report on Smoking and Health was published. This document of impeccable scientific authority, established that cigarette smoking was; causally related to lung cancer in men, directly related to illness and death from heart disease, and the leading contributory cause of death from chronic bronchitis. At the IPHA meeting on May 8, 1964, Addison Brown, M.D., a Des Moines physician and President of the Iowa Division of the American Cancer Society presented a paper on "Smoking and Health. At the 1986 IPHA meeting C. Everett Koop, M.D., Surgeon General spoke on the topic "Smoke Free Society by the Year 2000."

The future of public health has been a recurring topic at IPHA meetings. A few of the key presentations include: Reginald M. Atwater, M.D.; "The Increasing Social Significance of Public Health" in 1940 and "Highlights of the Changing Scene in Public Health" in 1944. In 1983, Richard Remington, Ph.D., of the University of Iowa presented; "New Challenges for Public Health in the 80s". In 1988, William Foege, M.D., former Director of CDC presented; "A Health Legacy for the 1990s. In 1989, after the release of the Institute of Medicine Report on "The Future of Public Health", Dr. Remington, who chaired the committee that prepared that report, spoke on: "The Future of Public Health".

The categorization of topics is very arbitrary and I put each presentation into just one category. With that said, Local Public Health and VD/STD tied with 18 presentations, and Legislation was close with 17. Wells and Waste Disposal (solid and liquid) had 14 each. Surprisingly, smoking was only a topic the two times mentioned above.

The peak year for polio in Iowa was 1952 with 3,564 cases. The results of the Salk vaccine trials were announced in April 1955 and 117,000 first and second graders in Iowa received the vaccine in September 1955. The last time polio was a topic at IPHA was 1960. The first year that HIV/AIDS was a topic was 1986. It was a topic again in 1987, 1988, and 1989.

The conference registration was \$1.00 in 1942 and each year through 1955. In 1956 and 1957 the meetings were joint meetings with the Tuberculosis and Health Association, the Trudeau Society, and the Heart Association. There was no registration fee and lunches were \$2.25 and dinner \$3.25. In 1958 it was a joint meeting with the Tuberculosis and Health Association and the Trudeau Society and the lunch fee was increased to \$2.50. The 1966 meeting was a joint meeting with the Middle States Public Health Association. In 1968 the registration fee was \$15.00 and included two luncheons and a banquet. The 1982 registration fee was \$35.00, non-members paid \$50, and included two luncheons, a banquet, and a breakfast. The first joint conference with the Iowa Environmental Health Association was in 1983. A majority of the annual meetings through 1989 were held in Des Moines. Beginning in 1965, meetings were also held in Cedar Rapids, Fort Dodge, Davenport, Ames, Coralville, and Sioux City. Cedar Rapids was the most common site away from Des Moines.

If you would like more information about anything in this article, please contact me (reckoff@radiks.net) or see me at the 2010 Spring Conference. And please consider sending me your thoughts about what the conferences have meant to you.

QUIZ

1. What was the last year that polio was a topic?
2. What was the first year that HIV/AIDS was a topic?
3. Who was John MacVicar and why was he at the IPHA meetings in 1942, 1943, 1944 and 1946?
4. What was the registration fee in 1968 (included 3 meals)?
5. What was the most frequent topic in the 1930s?
6. What city was the second most common site for meetings during this period?
7. When did IPHA and IEHA begin having a joint annual meeting?
8. What was Surgeon General C. Everett Koop's topic at the 1986 meeting?
9. Which topic has been a subject more often? Legislation, Tuberculosis, Local Public Health, Waste Disposal, VD/STD, Smoking, or Wells?

The answers will be found somewhere in the body of the article.