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MEDICAL HEALTH OFFICER TO SPEAK AT CIRCUMPOLAR HEALTH CONFERENCE

WHITEHORSE – The Yukon’s Medical Health Officer, Dr. Bryce Larke, will be a guest speaker at the 13th International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Novosibirsk, Siberia.

Larke is one of three Canadians who have been invited to make a presentation on viral hepatitis in the North and is one of about 60 Canadians attending the five-day conference, from June 12 to 16.

Larke’s involvement with hepatitis began in 1982 when he received a \$300,000 grant from the Donner Canadian Foundation to visit all Northwest Territories (NWT) communities to take blood samples from a large number of residents for evidence of active and past infection with hepatitis B virus.

After three years and collecting over 14,200 blood samples, the results were such that he was contracted by the federal government to provide vaccination in several NWT communities where there were many people with active infection.

“Having conceived the idea of the project, and being able to take it through to successful completion with vaccination of so many persons considered to be “at-risk” of hepatitis B, made this project perhaps the most gratifying accomplishment of my professional life,” Larke said.

Health and Social Services Minister Brad Cathers said he was pleased with Larke’s participation in the congress. “It is a testament to the skills and talents of our Medical Health Officer that he was invited to speak at the conference. We are very fortunate to have a physician of his calibre looking after the public health interests of Yukoners,” Cathers said.

Larke has continued his involvement in viral hepatitis work and views his invitation as a recognition of his work by his peers.

“Persons conducting health studies in remote northern regions of the world tend to be a special breed of dedicated individuals and it is a privilege to continue to be included in their ranks through my current position as Yukon’s Medical Health Officer,” Larke said. Following the workshop in Siberia, he plans to work with others on developing an improved viral hepatitis surveillance system shared between circumpolar countries.

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Contact:
Peter Carr
Cabinet Communications Advisor
(867) 667-8868
peter.carr@gov.yk.ca

Pat Living, Communication Specialist
Health & Social Services
(867) 667-3673
patricia.living@gov.yk.ca