



Indian Health Priorities

2012—2013

The California Tribal Epidemiology Center (CTEC) updated our health priorities by seeking input from American Indian community members and Indian Health Clinic staff between March 2012 and May 2013, regarding their most important health concerns in their respective communities. The survey was disseminated electronically, in which participants were asked to rank their top 10 health concerns from a list of 27 topics. An “Other” option was provided for additional concerns not listed in the survey. Participants were given the option to provide a reason why they ranked their number one health issue as the highest concern in their community.

A total of 463 surveys were collected during this period. Forty-seven health board members, 20 tribal council members, 143 Indian Health Clinic Staff, and 242 community members completed the survey (respondents could choose more than one option). CTEC will use the results of the survey to better inform areas to focus on for projects and intervention efforts.

The health issues of highest concern for California American Indians for CTEC to focus on in the coming years are:

- 1. Diabetes**
- 2. Drug Abuse**
- 3. Eating Healthy, Exercise, and Controlling Obesity**
- 4. Mental Health**
- 5. Alcohol Abuse**
- 6. Dental Health**
- 7. Elder Care and Support**
- 8. Heart Disease and Stroke**
- 9. Getting or Paying for Medications**
- 10. Mother and Child Health**

Comments on why participants ranked the health issue as the highest concern in their community

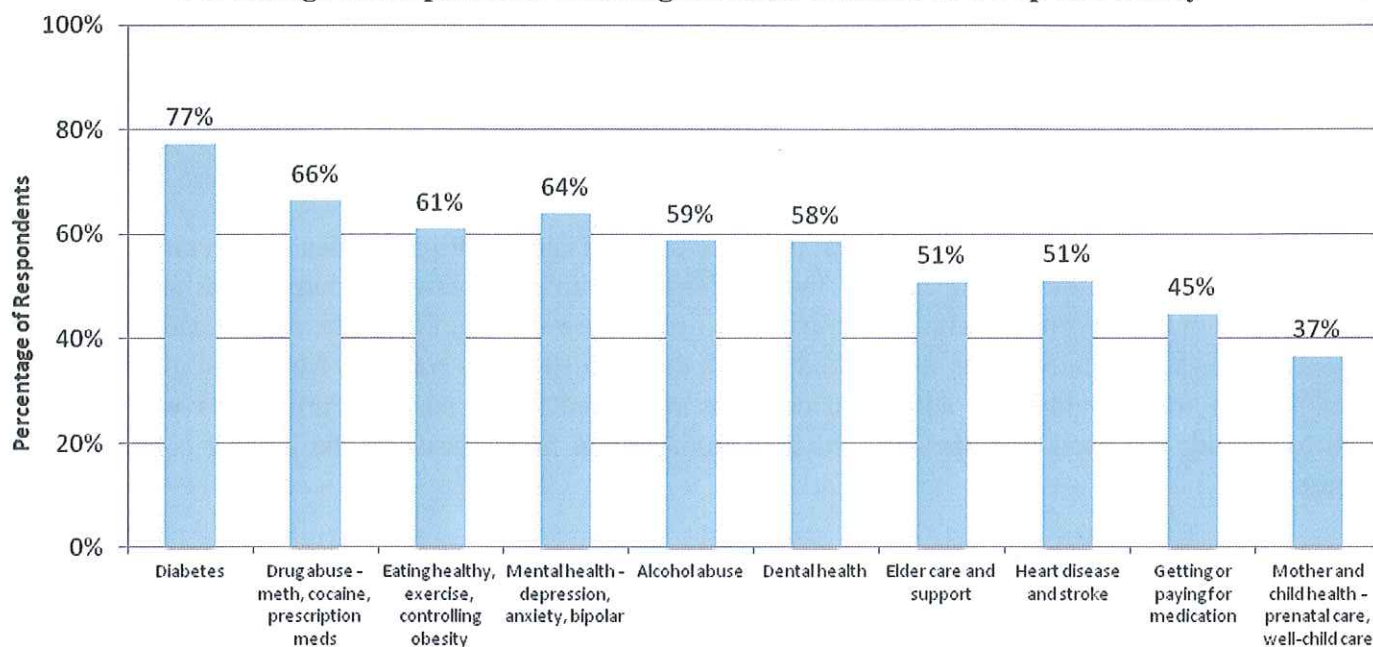
“It’s hard where I come from, there’s not enough help or programs to help people and stay sober,” about drug abuse.

“Diabetes seems to affect the majority of our patients and it affects all parts of a person’s life.”

“Alcohol abuse effects our tribal communities, and more needs to be done to prevent, educate, and heal our people.”

“The availability of healthy choices to persons in our community could use improvement, as well as how to incorporate healthy choices into their everyday life.”

Percentage of Respondents Ranking a Health Concern as a Top 10 Priority



Chronic diseases, behavioral health, and having a healthy lifestyle (preventative health) were the top health categories of importance for respondents. Diabetes and drug abuse were the top two health concerns, which stayed the same from the previous Indian Health Priorities report. Compared to the previous report, Mother and Child Health was identified as a priority (#10) for the first time, while Cancer is no longer in the top ten. Health issues that increased in priority are: Eating Health (#4 to #3), Mental Health (#5 to #4), Dental Health (#7 to #6), Elder Care and Support (#8 to #7). Those that decreased in priority are: Heart Disease and Stroke (#6 to #8), and Alcohol Abuse (#3 to #5).

The graph shows **Diabetes was ranked as the highest concern** in communities with more than three-fourths (77%, n=342) of participants ranking it in their top ten health concerns for their community. Diabetes is an important health topic to focus on; American Indians and Alaska Natives (AIAN) continue to have the highest rates of type II Diabetes in the United States, and in 2009 Diabetes was found to be the fourth-leading cause of death.^(1,2) Diabetes is associated with obesity, poor nutrition, and low levels of exercise, which was the number three priority among people surveyed.

Substance abuse, including drugs (ranked #2) and alcohol (ranked #5), was also found to be a major concern. It is associated with social problems such as driving under the influence, stress, violence, homelessness, and crime and long-term health risks including cardiovascular and psychiatric problems, cancer, and liver disease. Sixty-six percent of participants ranked drug abuse as a top ten health concern while 59% ranked alcohol abuse as a top ten health concern.

*Thank you for those who took the time to fill out a survey.
Your answers help us focus our work to provide better services to American Indians.*

References:

1. U.S. Department of Health and Human Services-Indian Health Services, Diabetes. January 2013. [cited 2013 Aug 15]; Available from: <http://www.ihs.gov/newsroom/factsheets/diabetes/>
2. Heron, M. Deaths: Leading causes for 2009. National vital statistics reports; vol 61 no 7. Hyattsville MD: National center for Health Statistics. 2012.