MEMBER GROUPS

News about APHA’s Sections, SPIGs, Student Assembly, Forums & Caucuses

Feats highlighted at Annual Meeting

Occupational Health and Safety Section celebrates 100 years

MARKING a century as an APHA member group, the Occupational Health and Safety Section plans to use its sessions at APHA’s 142nd Annual Meeting and Exposition in November to mix the present with the past.

Formed in 1914, the Occupational Health and Safety Section was first known as the Industrial Hygiene Section, said Glenn Shor, PhD, MPP, chair of the Section’s 100th Anniversary Committee. The Section, the Association’s sixth, formed at a time when attention to work-related injuries and illness was growing — especially following a 1911 fire at the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory in New York City, which killed 146 workers.

“We see discussions of the issues of industrial hygiene and occupational disease appear in annual meetings of APHA as early as 1909,” Shor told The Nation’s Health. “By 1914, the Association recognized that the public health impacts of work were as important to the health of the nation as communicable diseases and sanitary food and water.”

In the first 40 years of the Section, most of the leadership comprised medical doctors and those who worked for corporations, said David Kotchuck, PhD, MHPH, a 100th Anniversary Committee member. But the makeup of the membership began to diversify after World War II, he said.

Those changes led to a name change in 1955 to the Occupational Health and Safety Section. Over time the Section expanded to include occupations members see in the Section today: nurses, doctors, academicians, union members and more.

The new attitudes among members set the stage for the 1970 Occupational Safety and Health Act, which the Section fought for and continues to advocate for. The act is a comprehensive set of federal guidelines employers must follow to keep their workers safe.

Kotchuck said Section members for years testified in congressional hearings against attempts to weaken parts of the Occupational Health and Safety Administration law. Through APHA policy and congressional testimony, the Section also urged the federal government to adopt safety standards for asbestos exposure in the 1960s and 1970s and both the health risks of occupational lead poisoning and exposure to blood-borne pathogens in the 1980s and 1990s, said Katherine Kirkland, DrPH, MHPH, the Section chair.

Today, the Section deals with issues such as expanding rights, such as health benefits, for temporary workers supporting policies that prevent workplace violence. The Section recently provided comments to OSHA on silica, a toxic dust that puts construction workers at risk for respiratory disease and lung cancer.

The role of past leaders will be recognized during Section events at the Annual Meeting in New Orleans. Some of the Section’s sessions will be named for historic occupational health leaders, such as Alice Hamilton, the section’s first female officer.

In addition, Section members will collaborate with multiple groups including members of the APHA History Project for a special session 4101 held at 10:30 a.m. Tuesday, Nov. 18 on the Section’s history.

The APHA History Project is an ongoing initiative to collect and archive member group histories on the project’s website. David Rosner, PhD, MHPH, the Ronald H. Lauterstein professor of biomedical sciences at Columbia University’s Mailman School of Public Health, is scheduled as the keynote speaker.

“The Socialist Caucus’ annual Walter Lear session, 188, is ‘Celebrating 100 Years of Fighting for Workers’ Health and Safety’ at 2:30 p.m. Sunday, Nov. 16, Kirkland said. A poster session showing the timeline of the Section’s history will be on display in the expo hall from 4:30 to 5:30 p.m. Tuesday.

Shor said he does not just see the 100th anniversary celebration as a one-time event, but a work in progress on cataloging the Section’s history for years to come.

To browse Section events at the Annual Meeting, visit the online program at bit.ly/APHA ProgramAM14.

Photo by Elizabeth Routh, courtesy U.S. Department of Labor

A worker wears safety gear while doing construction on July 25, 2013. APHA’s Occupational Health and Safety Section has made efforts to protect workers from hazards such as silica, for more than 100 years.

PHIEP Section film festival hops across pond to United Kingdom

THE APHA Film Festival is a popular session for Annual Meeting and Exposition attendees. A chance meeting between two public health professionals at APHA’s 141st Annual Meeting and Expo- siton in Boston allowed the festival to travel across the pond this summer.

As APHA Executive Director Georges Benjamin, MD, asked opening session attendees to greet seatmates, Pamela Luna, DrPH, MRD, the film festival co-chair, met John Ashton, MD, CBE, president of the United Kingdom’s Faculty of Public Health of the Royal Colleges of Medicine of London, Edinburgh and Glasgow.

Ashton then attended a festival session Luna spoke at a panel on the media’s objectification of girls at the Faculty of Public Health Conference in July in Manchester, England.

Today, the Festival has moved to APHA’s 142nd Annual Meeting and Exposition in New Orleans and will feature 12 sessions and over 60 films, three of which will be in the special themed format that debuted in Boston last year. A direct follow-up to Luna’s 2013 session on objectification of girls is scheduled as the keynote speaker.

Luna said there are also plans to partner with the Royal Society of Medicine to have the APHA Film Festival become a satellite site for the Global Public Health Film Initiative, supported by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

The initiative, which may include a film festival in 2015, is aimed at using film to influence health practice and policy worldwide. Luna is in talks to have films shown at APHA’s Film Festival at the 2015 Annual Meeting in Chicago.

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In conjunction with the film festival, the Medical Care Section will show two screenings of “Within the Eye of the Storm,” about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and two people’s work to end infighting, at session 3356.1 at 6:30 p.m. and 8:30 p.m. Monday. Film director Sheldon Melnick was an expert panelist.

Ashton also had a panel on the media’s objectification of girls featuring four films and served as an expert panelist.

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— Natalie McGill

Photo courtesy Mahala Nelson

Pamela Luna, co-chair of the APHA Film Festival, speaks at a panel on the media’s objectification of girls at the Faculty of Public Health Conference in July in Manchester, England.

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