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www.canhelpworkinggroup.ca
Helicobacter pylori

• Common bacterial infection worldwide
• Elevated prevalence in developing countries and marginalized populations within developed countries, including arctic populations
• Often asymptomatic, chronic infection causes gastritis, peptic ulcers and, in rare instances, stomach cancer
• Often acquired in childhood
Community-Driven Research

CANHelp (Canadian North Helicobacter pylori) Working Group

• Community concerns about health risks from *H. pylori* infection

• Health authorities seeking information to improve clinical management of *H. pylori* infection and inform public health policy related to *H. pylori* infection
Organizational Structure
Fort McPherson, Northwest Territories

- Located on the Peel River at approximately 67°N and 134°W
- Hamlet had a population of 755 people in 2015
- Majority of residents are Gwich’in or Dene
- A ‘remote’ community accessible most of the year by road or by air
Youth Engagement in Health Research

• Few examples in the literature wherein Northern youth have been engaged as the primary targets for participatory ethnographic research.
• Possibly due to misconception that children are not fully culturally competent or that they lack the capacity to engage as active research participants.
Drawing as an Ethnographic Tool

• Drawing as a medium to engage with youth is well established in the field of psychology

• Facilitates communication of complex ideas that children may not be able or prepared to express verbally

• Drawing not only helps communicate ideas, but the process also helps the artist to process and organize their understanding of the subject matter itself
Fort McPherson *H. pylori* Project Logo

- Logo Design Contest open to children living in Fort McPherson in 2012
- 22 students at Chief Julius School submitted drawings
- Locally judged on how well each entry incorporated representations of the local community and *H. pylori* infection
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Artists have conceptually linked \textit{H. pylori} infection with local water sources.

The threat posed by \textit{H. pylori} is shown to be in the natural environment in these images, rather than within human bodies.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Artists have drawn a connection between *H. pylori* and themes of environmental contamination, conceptually linking the bacteria to pre-existing concerns about the bio-accumulation of toxins in the local environment.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Artists have represented locally held ideas about how *H. pylori* became a health concern; namely, the belief that it arrived in the community from the south via waterways.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Enmeshed in pre-established understandings of risks posed by climate change and environmental contamination in the arctic, *H. pylori* has been confounded when labeled as a toxin, as an infectious agent, as a parasite or ‘bug’, or as a disease in and of itself.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

The intrusion of over-sized *H. pylori* bacteria which threaten homes reflects both knowledge of and familiarity with the health treat posed to individuals and families.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Many drawings depict *H. pylori* in the natural environment, reflecting both a desire to pinpoint a ‘source’ of *H. pylori* as well as indicating the need to consider culturally relative views about health and wellness that are tethered to one’s relationship with the land.
Cross-Cultural Representations of *H. pylori*

Youths’ depictions of *H. pylori* in relation to nature contrasts with the way in which scientists and physicians are familiar with visualizing bacteria. This signals differences in ways of thinking about the underlying basis of health, disease, and wellbeing.
‘Reading’ the Drawings

Human actors depicted in the act of killing *H. pylori* symbolize an expectation that this active threat can be eliminated through directed human action.
Implications for Knowledge Translation

- Different ways of knowing and thinking about health and *H. pylori* influence how artists have depicted the bacteria.
- As cultural artifacts, drawings provide insight into culturally relative understandings of *H. pylori*.
- Knowledge of explanatory models is necessary for cultural competence in health care.
- Youths’ perceptions are valid for informing culturally appropriate public health and policy.
Future Research Directions

• Photovoice project engaging high-school students at Chief Julius School in Fort McPherson (June 2016)

• Project developed in response to community input calling for research and capacity building opportunities for youth in the community

• Project will explore local youths’ perceptions of the relationships linking culture, health, the environment and *H. pylori* infection
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