Through the Lens: Northern Youths’ Views of Health Through Photovoice

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Helicobacter pylori

- *H. pylori* infection is often asymptomatic
- It causes inflammation of the stomach lining; when this persists, it can lead to peptic ulcers and, in rare instances, stomach cancer
- Often acquired in childhood, most likely through direct contact with digestive fluids
Community-Driven Research

CANHelp (Canadian North Helicobacter pylori) Working Group

- Addresses community concerns about health risks from *H. pylori* infection

- Addresses health authorities need for information to improve clinical management of *H. pylori* infection and inform public health policy related to *H. pylori* infection
Fort McPherson, NWT

- Located on the Peel River at approximately 67°N and 134°W
- Hamlet had a population of 755 people circa 2015
- Most residents are Gwich’in Dene (Athabaskan) First Nations
- A ‘remote’ community accessible most of the year by road or by air
A Photovoice Project to Engage Indigenous Youth in Health Research

Participation was open to all grade 8-12 students attending Chief Julius School in Fort McPherson, NWT, Canada.

1. Training Workshops
2. Photography Assignment
3. Ethnographic Writing Exercises
Focus of the Photovoice Project

“Why are some people in Fort McPherson concerned about *H. pylori* infection?”

“How does *H. pylori* infection impact people’s lives in Fort McPherson?”
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Rationale for This Project

• Few examples of Northern Indigenous youth being engaged in participatory health research to date

• Likely due to longstanding misconception that children lack capacity to be active research participants
Two Kinds of Outputs

• Photographs to be used as primary data sources for research and knowledge translation

• Images with accompanying text for knowledge exchange
Analysis of the Images
Analysis of the Images

How do people get *H. pylori*?

Is *H. pylori* in the water? This is where I go swimming. Behind here there’s trails. When you go in the water back there, there’s worms that get on your skin.

Credit: Jaydee Alexie
Analysis of the Images

Ball is life.

I like playing basketball because it takes off tension, it keeps you busy and healthy.
Analysis of the Images

*H. Pylori* is common in the north.

The Richardson mountains are in the background. This boat was a hangout place for lots of us long ago. There used to be a park but they took it down. There was a fuel tank underground and it ‘erupted’ so they had to take down the park. There used to be benches and a whole bunch of other things, but we can’t do anything there anymore.

I like to be on the land too. If you have *H. pylori* you can’t work. You can’t go out on the land if you have to go to the washroom all the time.

I’m pretty sure boiling some gum juice could help with that.
Analysis of the Images

Cancer
Analysis of the Images

This one reminds me of the cemetery...

My grandma died and I barely got to know her. She died because she got cancer.

Credit: Jayde Alexie
Analysis of the Images

Water (Just Water).

One day I asked my Auntie Rhonda about *H. pylori* and she said: “I had *H. pylori* once. I was working at a construction site and all we drank was water and juice. The water came from the water truck. Once we were done work, all my co-workers got *H. pylori*. They think it’s from the water.”
Analysis of the Images
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Contributions of This Research

• Visually based approach to research design facilitates youth engagement

• Results inform future research that is culturally appropriate and locally relevant
Acknowledgements

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