

# Research Seminar Series

Dalla Lana School of Public Health

Thursday February 4, 2010, 12:00pm

## Lower Respiratory Tract Infections in Inuit Children, Intersection of Research and Advocacy

Anna Banerji, MD, MPH, FRCPC, DTM&H

Pediatric Infectious Disease, Tropical Medicine and Public Health

Assistant Professor, Faculty of Medicine, Departments of Pediatrics and Dalla Lana School of Public Health  
St. Michael's Hospital

### Seminar Description:



Dr Anna Banerji has been researching the causes of lower respiratory tract infections (LRTI) in Inuit children for almost 15 years. In this talk, Dr. Banerji will take you through several of her studies, the identified risks, the viruses and costs associated with LRTI. As her studies have evolved, it was evident that many risks were due to the poor living conditions such as overcrowding and differential access to health care. She believes that research is critical to gather evidence for policy makers, but in additionally clinicians, policy makers and greater society must unite to advocate for better health conditions for Aboriginal children in Canada, using a human rights framework. Recently the Canadian Paediatric Society has adapted some of her recommendations in a landmark policy change for Inuit infants.

### Guest Speaker Biography:

Dr. Anna Banerji is a graduate from the University of Toronto medical school and initially worked as an family and emergency physician in rural Ontario. She subsequently enrolled for a paediatric residency at the Children's Hospital of Eastern Ontario. In 1995 started a paediatric infectious disease fellowship at the Montreal Children's Hospital, where her focus was tropical medicine. During this year she made her first trip to Baffin Island, a trip which captivated her. In 1997 she won a CIHR clinical research fellowship to study respiratory infections in Inuit children. From 1998 to 2002 she moved to Vancouver where she set up a tropical disease clinic and worked at the British Columbia Children's Hospital. In 2002 she enrolled at the Master's degree in Public Health at the Harvard School of Public Health (HSPH), in International Health, where she was selected as the "promising graduate" for the HSPH class of 2003.

During this time Toronto was experiencing its second wave of SARS and Dr. Banerji as asked to be a consultant for SARS which evolved into a position as an Associate Medical Officer of Health, with the SARS portfolio. In 2005, Dr. Banerji decided to return to clinical medicine, and in 2008 she won the University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine award "Educational Excellence for Community Health Care Award". She is a member of the First Nations Inuit and Métis committee of the Canadian Paediatric Society, and the Principal Investigator for a circumpolar surveillance of respiratory viruses. Currently her work is primarily with refugee children and she was recently the course director for the inaugural *Canadian Refugee Health Conference* held in Toronto in November 2009. Recently the Canadian Paediatric Society has adapted some of her recommendations in a landmark policy change for Inuit infants.

### Health Sciences Building

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