

John Arthur Hildes Circumpolar Health Awards

Since 1987, the Hildes medal has been awarded at each International Congress on Circumpolar Health to distinguished individuals nominated by the adhering bodies of the International Union for Circumpolar Health. Since 1987, a total of twenty researchers and health workers from Alaska, Canada, the Nordic countries and Russia have received this award. Between them, the recipients share an unsurpassed volume of knowledge and experience about the Arctic. The editors of the Journal have asked the Hildes medal awardees to share some of their experiences with the readers and, in this issue, we are happy to publish the first article in the series. Bent Harvald and Inge Lynge from Denmark, who received the Hildes award in 1987 and 2000, respectively, have chosen to write the history of the Nordic Council for Arctic Medical Research, an organization that was active in the creation of the International Union for Circumpolar Health and whose report series was the immediate precursor of the journal.

Dr. Jack Hildes was born in Toronto, Canada, on January 22, 1918. He received his medical degree at the University of Toronto. After the war, he pursued postgraduate studies in Internal Medicine, Gastroenterology and Physiology in England as well as Canada. He received his MRCP degree in England in 1948, and his Fellowship in the Royal College of Physicians of Canada in 1949.

His work in cold physiology after the war led him to undertake numerous trips to the arctic regions of Canada and other circumpolar arctic regions. He developed a deep understanding both of the medical needs of arctic peoples and of the challenges that face health care workers in remote regions. In 1970, he formed the Northern Medical Unit within the University of Manitoba. The Unit now bears his name and continues its mission based on his founding principles of health

care service delivery, teaching and research. He was an early advocate for the empowerment of aboriginal people in health and health care issues.

Dr. Hildes died of cancer in 1984. In 1987, the Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health, with a grant from the Donner Canadian Foundation, struck a medal in honour of Dr. Hildes, to be awarded at each International Congress on Circumpolar Health. The recipients are chosen by each of the adhering bodies of the International Union for Circumpolar Health (IUCH), which include the Canadian Society for Circumpolar Health, the Nordic Society of Arctic Medicine, the Siberian Branch of the Russian Academy of Medical Sciences, the American Society for Circumpolar Health, and the Danish/Greenlandic Society for Circumpolar Health.

The award is one of prestige and honour, to be given to those working in any of the circumpolar nations with the dedication exemplified by Dr. Hildes. It is an international prize, awarded to individuals demonstrating excellence in northern medicine and health, in consideration of their contributions through service, research and humanitarianism.

We hope to receive and publish articles by the remaining and future Hildes awardees over the coming years. Furthermore, in order to make the Hildes award more visible, it has been decided to include a short plenary presentation by the awardees in the program of the coming International Congress on Circumpolar Health in Nuuk, that will take place during September, 2003 (www.icch12.org).

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