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# MLA urges constituents to get tested for bacteria

By JASON UNRAU  
Star Reporter

Old Crow is the second Arctic community in Canada to take part in a study on the prevalence of stomach bacteria linked to ulcers, gastritis and, in rare cases, cancer.

Researchers arrived in the remote Yukon village last weekend, and hope to test as many residents as possible for *Helicobacter pylori* bacteria, or H. pylori for short.

In southern Canada, the rate of H. pylori infection is between five and 30 per cent of the population, but a study in Aklavik, N.W.T., found that 62 per cent of participants tested positive for the bacteria (60 per cent, or 355 of Aklavik's 594 residents took part).

While 50 per cent of the global population is infected, 80 per cent of those people have no symptoms and experience no ill effects – they are known as asymptomatic carriers of the infection.

The remaining 20 per cent can suffer from anything from loss of appetite and stomach inflammation, to ulcers



DARIUS ELIAS

and cancer.

H. pylori infection is particularly high in developing countries burdened by crowded living conditions, poor sanitation and lack of clean water.

"Humans are the only known source of H. pylori," said Janis Huntington, project manager for the study that began in Aklavik three years ago.

"It's transmitted from one person to another so crowding and the number of children in a household are among the risk factors."

Huntington, a University of Alberta researcher, said that CANhelp (Canadian North *Helicobacter pylori* Working Group) has been asked to expand its work in Inuvialuit communities in the N.W.T.'s far north.

CANhelp also extended invitations to Lower Post, B.C.; Carmacks; Mayo; Pelly Crossing and Teslin to participate in the research project.

Those who test positive for the bacteria are offered an antibiotic treatment program, Huntington said, and may submit to an endoscopy – a more invasive procedure whereby a small camera is lowered into the stomach.

Vuntut Gwitchin MLA Darius Elias helped facilitate Old Crow's participation, and on Tuesday urged his constituents to get tested.

"The H. pylori bacteria can cause serious stomach-related health issues," Elias said.

"That's why I'm encouraging as many community members as possible to take the breath test."

migration...  
harvested down south – particularly in Saskatchewan and Alberta.

CWD is a persistent and invisible disease in its early stages which can last in the soil for years, posing a sig-

aspect to this regulation to ensure Yukoners understand just what's at stake when talking about the dangers of CWD, Toews suggested.

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