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### **Asthma Experts Gather Virtually at Summit to Discuss Impact of Air Pollution on Poor Asthma Outcomes**

*Presentations to include recently published, peer-reviewed research showing the short-term and long-term impact of air pollution on poor asthma outcomes in our region*

**PITTSBURGH, Pa.** – Some of the foremost experts on air pollution, health equity and asthma will present key health findings at "The Air We Breathe: A Regional Summit on Air Pollution and Asthma in Our Community," held virtually, from 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m. this Friday, Nov. 5, 2021.

The Summit is online, free and open to the public. The day-long symposium is supported by The Heinz Endowments and is one of a series of such events that have been held over the past 10 years. Individuals interested in attending can register at <https://cce.upmc.com/air-we-breathe-regional-summit-2021>.

Maureen Litchveld, M.D., Ph.D., Dean of the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, will present updated data describing the relationship between air pollution and adverse health outcomes.

Tesfaye Mersha, Ph.D., Associate Professor in the Department of Pediatrics, Cincinnati Children's Medical Center, will present very recent data showing the synergistic effect of air pollution and COVID-19 on adverse health outcomes, including pediatric asthma.

Irena Gorski-Steiner, Ph.D. candidate in the Department of Environmental Health and Engineering at Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health, will discuss the effect of fracking on poor asthma outcomes.

Conference organizer Deborah Gentile, M.D. and Brandy Brywa-Hill, Ph.D. candidate from the Graduate School of Public Health at the University of Pittsburgh, will present an "Update on the Impact of Air Pollution on Asthma Outcomes in Pittsburgh."

"The Asthma Summit is instrumental in raising awareness about the air pollution problem in our region and its impact on health outcomes," says Dr. Gentile. "My work showed near doubling of

outpatient and emergency department visits for asthma attacks in nearby adults in the aftermath of the Clairton Coke Works fire on Dec. 24, 2018."

The summit will also present data showing that Allegheny County is barely in attainment for PM2.5 and ozone and not in attainment for Sulfur Dioxide (SO<sub>2</sub>). Our region's PM2.5 level is unlikely to be in attainment when the EPA lowers the annual threshold during a review process in the next 18 months. PM 2.5 levels in Allegheny County are currently twice the new WHO recommended threshold.

Presentations from John Graham, Ph.D., Senior Scientist at Clean Air Task Force, and Randy Sargent, M.S., Senior System Scientist of Carnegie Mellon's Create Lab, will present the latest assessment of monitoring data, both EPA-managed as well as novel monitoring technologies.

Environmental Justice and Equity themes are prominent in this year's summit. James Fabisiak, Ph.D., University of Pittsburgh's Graduate School of Public Health, will present on the "Relationship Between Air Pollution and Environmental Justice in our Region." Jamil Bey, Ph.D., CEO of UrbanKind, will discuss "Regional Barriers to Achieving Health Equity." Tyra Bryant-Stephens, M.D., Director of Childhood Asthma Prevention Program at Children's Hospital of Philadelphia, will share "Strategies to Overcome Barriers to Health Equity."

The symposium concludes with two discussion panels on "Strategies to Alert and Protect Residents from Air Pollution Exposures" and "Policy Initiatives to Improve Our Region's Air Pollution," featuring regional speakers advocating for needed changes to notification, enforcement and overall reduction in air pollution and its negative health impacts.

For more details, please see the [Summit Agenda](#).

### **About The Breathe Project:**

The [Breathe Project](#) is working to promote clean air and inspire healthy communities across southwestern Pennsylvania. We use the best available science to understand the quality of the air we breathe, build public awareness and improve community health and wellness. Follow our community of nearly 20,000 on [Facebook](#) or join us on Twitter [@breatheproject](#).