

HERE COMES THE SMOKE

Emerging Public Health Challenges in a Changing Climate

April 21, 2026 | 8:00 am – 4:30 pm
Vancouver Marriott Pinnacle Downtown Hotel, 1128 W Hastings St, Vancouver, BC
(Join us for a social networking event to mingle with colleagues and the speakers from 4:30-5:30 pm)

BC LUNG FOUNDATION

23rd Annual Air Quality and Health Workshop

This workshop will explore the impact of wildfire smoke on health, focusing on recent research that links recurring exposure with a wide range of health effects. Attendees will gain insights into some differences between wildfire smoke and other types of air pollution, as well as strategies for mitigating health impacts in a warmer and smokier world.

TIME	TOPIC	SPEAKER
08:30-08:45	Welcome	Chris Lam, President & CEO, BC Lung Foundation
Morning Chair: Ryan Allen		
08:45-09:15	Wildfire Smoke: Setting the Scene	Sarah Henderson, BCCDC
09:15-09:45	Wildfire Smoke vs. Pollution from Other Sources: Emerging Evidence	Chris Carlsten, UBC
09:45-10:15	BREAK	
10:15-11:00	The Hazelwood Health Study	Fay Johnston, University of Tasmania
11:00-11:30	Chronic Exposure to Wildfire Smoke and Cardiopulmonary Health	Sanjay Rajagopalan, Case Western Reserve University
11:30-12:00	Presentation of Caton and Bates Scholarships	
12:00-13:00	LUNCH	
After Lunch Chair: Michael Brauer		
13:00-13:30	Chronic Exposure to Wildfire Smoke: Effects Beyond the Heart and Lungs	Angela Yao, BCCDC
13:30-14:00	Protecting Indoor Air Quality During Wildfire Smoke Events	Abdel Darwich, Guttman & Blaevoet
14:00-14:30	Outdoor Events: Advising with Imperfect Evidence	Michael Koehle, UBC
14:30-15:00	BREAK	
Final Session Chair: Chris Carlsten		
15:00-15:30	Wildfire Smoke and Health Recommendations: Understanding Community Values, Preferences, and Needs	Stephanie Harvard, UBC
15:30-16:15	The Burden of Disease from Wildfire Smoke in a Changing Climate	Marshall Burke, Stanford University
16:15-16:20	Closing Remarks	
16:20-17:30	Networking, speakers available, cash bar	

Faculty



Sarah Henderson is the scientific director of Environmental Health Services at BCCDC and of the National Collaborating Centre for Environmental Health (NCEEH). She is also a professor (partner) in the UBC School of Population & Public Health. Sarah oversees a program of applied environmental health research, surveillance, and knowledge translation to support evidence-based policy in BC and across Canada. Her work spans a wide range of topics, including air pollution from all provincially relevant sources (wildfire smoke, residential woodsmoke, industry, road dust, shipping, and vehicles), extreme weather events, radon gas, food safety, water quality, and exposures managed by the Drug and Poison Information Centre (DPIC). All of her research is integrated by core competencies in data science, biostatistics, stakeholder engagement, knowledge translation, and mentorship.



Chris Carlsten is Professor of Medicine, Chair in Occupational and Environmental Lung Disease, and Head of Respiratory Medicine at the University of British Columbia. He directs the Air Pollution Exposure Laboratory, the Centre for Lung Health and Legacy for Airway Health at Vancouver Coastal Health Research Institute. His research focuses on the respiratory and immunological health effects of inhaled environmental and occupational exposures.



Sanjay Rajagopalan MD, MBA, is the Chief of Cardiovascular Medicine, Chief Academic and Scientific Officer, University Hospitals Harrington Heart and Vascular Institute, Herman Hellerstein, MD Professor of Medicine and Biomedical Engineering and Director of the Case Cardiovascular Research Institute at Case Western Reserve School of Medicine, Cleveland, OH. Dr. Rajagopalan is a graduate of the Sloan School of Management at MIT, specializing in health analytics and sustainability science. Dr. Rajagopalan is a well-known expert in the impact of environmental pollution and climate change on cardiovascular health. He has led many innovative initiatives in healthcare centered around care delivery for high-risk patient populations, precision medicine imaging initiatives and next generation approaches for the prevention of heart and metabolic disease. Dr. Rajagopalan is an elected member of the American Society of Clinical Investigation (ASCI), American Association of Physicians (AAP), American Professors of Cardiology and is the recipient of the American College of Cardiology's Distinguished Scientist Award as well as the American Heart Association Distinguished Scientist Award. Dr. Rajagopalan has been funded continuously through the NIH for >20 years and currently holds a prestigious 8-year R35 Pioneer grant, 5 RO-1 grants as Co-PI or PI and a P50 National Institute of Minority Health Center Grant.



Fay Johnston MD PhD, is a Professor in Environmental Health and Public Health Physician at the Menzies Institute for Medical Research, University of Tasmania. Her research focuses on the escalating hazards relating to landscape fires, airborne allergens and air pollution. Fay directs the Centre for Safe Air, a NHMRC Centre of Research Excellence and co-leads the air quality research stream of Australia's National Environmental Science Program. She is also a founder and executive director of AirHealth, an Australian company delivering real-time and forecast air quality, allergen and health information.



Stephanie Harvard, PhD, is a Senior Scientist at Legacy for Airway Health in the UBC Faculty of Medicine, where she works at the intersection of health economics, public health ethics, and respiratory medicine. Her research focuses on how patient and public values can shape health guidance, policies, and models, including those that affect lung health. She is currently leading projects on community values around actions to prevent harm from wildfire smoke, the trustworthiness of clinical and public health guidance, and patient and public involvement in health economics modelling, with a focus on interventions for asthma management.



Angela Yao is a Senior Scientist at the Environmental Health Services at the BC Centre for Disease Control. She is also an Adjunct Professor at the School of Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia. Dr Yao leads the Climate Preparedness and Adaptation Program, supporting regional and provincial public health partners in climate adaptation with data and scientific evidence. She has been working on research, surveillance and knowledge translation on the population health impacts of wildfire smoke for over 10 years.



Marshall Burke is Professor of Global Environmental Policy in the Doerr School of Sustainability at Stanford University, a Senior Fellow at the Center on Food Security and the Environment, the Freeman Spogli Institute for International Studies, the Stanford Woods Institute for the Environment, and the Stanford Institute for Economic Policy Research. He is also a Research Fellow at the National Bureau of Economic Research.

His research uses tools from the social and natural sciences to measure environmental change, understand how society is impacted by this change, and evaluate how it can respond. His work spans topics including climate change, air pollution, food security, and poverty measurement, and combines methods from economics, statistics, remote sensing, and machine learning.

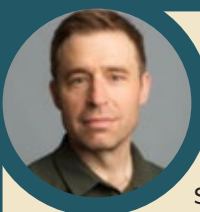
He holds a PhD in Agricultural and Resource Economics from UC Berkeley, and a BA in International Relations from Stanford.

He directs the Environmental Change and Human Outcomes Lab (ECHO Lab) at Stanford, is co-founder of Atlas AI, and co-creator of the Environmental Hazards Adaptation Atlas.



Abdel Darwich is a principal with Guttman & Blaevoet Consulting Engineers in their Sacramento, California office and a consulting member for the California Hospital Safety Board. He has 25 years of experience in the design of mechanical systems for buildings.

Abdel is a member of ASHRAE Guideline 44 committee which detailed how to protect buildings from wildfires' smoke. He was the author of the wildfire chapter in the Emergency Design Guide for California Hospitals. Abdel has been a member of ASHRAE Standard 62.1 "Ventilation and acceptable Indoor Air quality" for 15 years. Abdel is an ASHRAE Fellow and recipient of four ASHRAE Awards.



Michael Koehle, MD, PhD, is a physician practicing academic sport and exercise medicine at the University of British Columbia, a Professor in the School of Kinesiology, and the Director of the Division of Sport and Exercise Medicine in the Faculty of Medicine at UBC. His research focuses on the interaction between exercise, the environment and health with a specific focus on climate change resilience in the setting of physical activity.

Scholarships

Dr. David V. Bates Scholarship



Aidan Comeau is a PhD candidate at the University of British Columbia, working under the supervision of Dr. Michael Koehle in the Environmental Physiology Laboratory. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Kinesiology and a Master of Science in Kinesiology from the University of Alberta.

His doctoral research examines how aerobic exercise influences physiological responses to ozone exposure. Through a series of related human exposure studies employing a bespoke air pollutant exposure system of his own design, Aidan seeks to acutely characterize the dose-response relationship for ozone-induced reductions in pulmonary function. Building on this work, he will also investigate how aerobic exercise interacts with ozone exposure to influence the mechanics of breathing.

Following the completion of his PhD, Aidan aims to pursue an academic career that integrates his passion for teaching and research within the field of environmental physiology.

Dr. Robert B. Caton Scholarship



Ezra Yu is a PhD student in Population and Public Health at the University of British Columbia specializing in environmental and cancer epidemiology under the supervision of Dr. Trevor Dummer. His doctoral research applies Bayesian spatial modeling to integrate environmental and health datasets to examine how the environmental exposome, including air pollution, radon, and asbestos, influences lung cancer risk among non-smokers while accounting for spatial and temporal patterns. His work aims to contribute to a Canadian research hub that serves as an international leader in environmental epidemiology, advancing new methods, training future scholars, and generating evidence that informs air-quality policy.

Beyond academia, he contributes to community engagement through volunteer work in cancer prevention and language translation services supporting immigrant communities, promoting equity in health research and access to public health information.

Organizing Committee

Dr. Ryan Allen
Simon Fraser University
Dr. Menn Biagtan
BC Lung Foundation

Dr. Michael Brauer
University of British Columbia
Dr. Christopher Carlsten
University of British Columbia

Dr. Eric Coker
BC Centre for Disease Control and Prevention
Dr. Sarah Henderson
Chair, BC Centre for Disease Control

Thanks to:

