



Abstract Title: The role of trees and greenspace in healthy urban living

Daniel Rainham
Healthy Populations
Institute
Dalhousie University

James Steenberg
School for Resource &
Environmental Studies
Dalhousie University

Peter Duinker
School for Resource &
Environmental Studies
Dalhousie University

Introduction/Background

Trees and greenspaces play important roles in promoting health and in supporting the sustainability of urban ecosystems (Author et al., 2015; Crouse et al., 2017). Studies looking at exposures to greenspaces suggest that benefits to health accrue through several pathways, including increased physical activity (Sallis et al., 2016), stress reduction (Rook, 2013) and by regulating essential health-supporting ecosystem services, such as protection from harmful substances such as air pollution (Grote et al., 2016). The more we understand about these health benefits, the more we can promote them in places where they are largely unfulfilled.

Purpose

The purpose of the workshop is to summarize the recent research relating to the roles of trees and greenspace in promoting human health in urban spaces and to discuss promising avenues for both research and practice to investigate and further promote these roles.

Approach

We propose a 90-min session during which the first half will include three short presentations, one by each of the three of us. DR will deliver an overview of the roles of trees and greenspace in healthy urban living, will share insights into the distribution of, and access to, natural amenities in urban areas, and will share a conceptual framework for understanding these roles. JS will summarize the state of empirical research on the links between trees and human health in cities. PD will follow with a talk on the implications for managing urban trees and greenspace to foster human health.

For the second half, PD will facilitate a dialogue among participants who may wish to share their perspectives on the subject matter of the talks. Specific attention will be drawn to the key gaps in knowledge and how they might be fulfilled using targeted collaborative research that potentially engages the assembled participants in the development of new research plans or health policy initiatives.

Outcomes

Participants will leave the session with an updated perspective on how trees and greenspaces serve to enhance human health and the experience of urban living. They will also have had opportunity to contribute to identifying promising new avenues for research and practice. Finally, participants will have been able to network with prior and potential new scholarly colleagues.

Conclusion

All three of us are seasoned researchers and presenters. PD has over thirty years of experience in facilitating research workshops. We anticipate that the workshop will be seen by participants as a unique opportunity for co-mingling of perspectives on the topic through engagement of ecologists and health scholars.

References

- Crouse, D. L., Pinault, L., Balram, A., et al. (2017). Urban greenness and mortality in Canada's largest cities: a national cohort study. *The Lancet Planetary Health*, 1, e289-e297.
- Author et al. (2015). Trees in Canadian cities: indispensable life form for urban sustainability. *Sustainability*, 7, 7379-7396.
- Grote, R. et al. (2016). Functional traits of urban trees: air pollution mitigation potential. *Frontiers of Ecology and Environment*, 14, 543-550.
- Rook G.A. (2013). Regulation of the immune system by biodiversity from the natural environment: An ecosystem service essential to health. *Proc Natl Acad Sci*, 110, 18360–7.
- Sallis J.F., Cerin E., Conway T.L., et al. (2016). Physical activity in relation to urban environments in 14 cities worldwide: a cross-sectional study. *Lancet*, 387, 2207–17.

Cite this document in APA:

Rainham, D., Steenberg, J., Duinker, P. (2018, September). *The role of trees and greenspace in healthy urban living*. Paper presented at the Healthy Living, Healthy Life: Collaborative Health Conference on Research, Practice and Community Innovations Conference, Dalhousie University, Halifax, NS. Retrieved from <https://ojs.library.dal.ca/HLHL/>

CC BY-NC-SA