Public Health in the Anthropocene

TREVOR HANCOCK
Professor and Senior Scholar, School of Public Health and Social Policy, University of Victoria, B.C.

A growing number of earth scientists have suggested that we are entering a new geological epoch—the Anthropocene. The impact of humanity on the Earth has grown so large that our footprint will be evident in the geologic record far into the future. We are undermining the fundamental ecological determinants of the health of the population. The global ecological changes we are creating—from climate change to species extinction, ecotoxicity to ocean acidification, resource depletion to disruption of important geochemical cycles—will have massive implications for human wellbeing (not to mention the wellbeing of myriad other species), for communities and societies, and indeed for our entire modern civilization. The greatest challenge we face in the 21st century is how to live together in a socially just, harmonious and sustainable way, on this one small blue dot we call home. To do so, we will have to change our way of life, our economy, our politics and our culture.

In this presentation Dr. Hancock will explore the implications of the Anthropocene for health, the challenges we face and how we should respond. He will pay particular attention to the role of modern-day public health in addressing these issues.