RESPIRATORY HEALTH EFFECTS OF GLOBAL TRANSPORT OF AFRICAN DUST

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While there has been substantial investigation of how global climate change impacts our ecosystem, there has been less attention to the impact on human health. Over the past several decades, excessively dry conditions and severe dust storms in Africa have resulted in transport of large amounts of dust to North Africa, Europe and the Americas, including the Caribbean. It is estimated that over 20 million tons of dust particles arrive in the Caribbean annually and Barbados, as the easternmost Caribbean island, is among those most affected. This session aims to describe what is known about human health effects of African dust with a focus on respiratory health effects, using research in the Caribbean as a model. Asthma is a major public health problem in Barbados and asthma-related morbidity has been increasing over the last several decades. The rise in asthma prevalence in Barbados has paralleled the increasing particle concentrations from African dust events during this time period. Findings from work in Barbados investigating the impact of African dust on childhood asthma will be shared. Future directions needed to better understand the respiratory health effects of African dust will also be explored.