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**ASTHMA EXPERTS CALL FOR POLLUTION CONTROLS ON
FISK & CRAWFORD POWER PLANTS**

Urges Asthma Tracking & More Surveillance

Community Walkers Place Warning Signs on Fisk Power Plant

Asthma specialists from leading Chicago hospitals, agencies and community organizations converged on Alivio Medical Center on World Asthma Day, Tuesday, May 2 to call for emission controls on Fisk and Crawford power plants which they call the single biggest sources of pollution in Chicago, and the largest single contributors to asthma attacks.

A Harvard School of Public Health study found that air pollution from the two coal-fired plants causes more than 40 deaths, 550 emergency room visits, and 2,800 asthma attacks annually.

Following the press conference, area residents walked to the nearby Fisk power plant where they placed warning signs alerting residents to the dangers of Chicago's two coal-fired plants.

Power plant emission reductions are a key recommendation of Chicago's Asthma Action Plan, an annual assessment of strategies and accomplishments in the city's fight against asthma. Chicago's asthma hospitalization rate is double the national average and the mortality rate for African American and Latino populations is more than five times the rate for whites.

The Chicago Asthma Action Plan Advisory Council, a collaborative of leaders from medicine, government, environmental agencies and community-based organizations calls for tracking of asthma-related school absences, implementation of uniform hospital discharge procedures, funding of statewide asthma surveillance and pollution-reducing retrofits on diesel equipment for construction projects.

"We're making progress in the fight against asthma," says Dr. Jay Shannon, Chief of Pulmonary and Critical Care Medicine and Director of the Adult Asthma Clinic, Stroger Hospital, "but we have to curtail pollution from these plants. In Chicago we're experiencing more deaths from coal-fired power plants than from homicides."

Fisk's original generators were christened by Thomas Edison over 100 years ago and emit 17,000 tons of particulate matter annually. Old plants such as Fisk and Crawford are often exempt from rigorous clean air regulations. The Fisk plant is located at 1111 W. Cermak in Pilsen and the Crawford plant is at 3501 S. Pulaski in the Little Village community.

“Every day we see the effects of these emissions on the faces of our children,” says Carmen Velasquez, Executive Director of Alivio Medical Center. “Parents come to our doors with children who can’t breathe, can’t talk and in severe cases showing a discoloration of lips and nails. Every child in every neighborhood deserves clean air. We must work together to get these plants cleaned up.”

An estimated 318,000 adults and 122,000 children in the city have medically-diagnosed asthma although actual asthma rates may be far higher among the two million children who reside within a 30-mile radius of the Fisk and Crawford plants.

"Little Village and Pilsen residents pay the price for having coal-fired plants in our community everyday. We pay our monthly bill to get energy, then we pay an even higher price through lost work and missed school days. It's time for Chicago to stop footing the bill and pass legislation to clean up the plants," said Kimberly Wasserman, Coordinator, Little Village Environmental Justice Organization.

Advertising students from Columbia College developed a comprehensive public service campaign in support of cleaning up the plants. Public service announcements produced by the students will be airing on English and Spanish-language radio and television stations.

Twenty-seven organizations have signed up in support of the Asthma Action Plan for the City of Chicago.

World Asthma Day is funded through educational grants received from the Illinois Department of Public Health and GlaxoSmithKline.

The Third Annual Chicago Asthma Action Plan and its participating organizations can be reviewed at www.asthmaactionplanchicago.org

The American Lung Association of Metropolitan Chicago, located at 1440 W. Washington Blvd, is one of the oldest health charities in the country and is currently observing its 100th anniversary. For more information 312-243-2000 or click on www.lungchicago.org.