

and effectiveness of their products, including information about therapeutic properties and side effects.

**Environmental health.** Responsibilities include studying adverse effects on human health of the chemical and physical environment, investigating the health effects of tobacco smoke, and ensuring the safety, effectiveness and non-fraudulent nature of radiation-emitting and medical devices. Health hazard assessments are developed for work and home environments, pesticides, household products, air and water. Research is conducted on radiation hazards, and adverse effects of environmental chemicals.

**Disease control.** A national laboratory centre in Health and Welfare Canada plays a central role in combatting diseases. Communicable disease outbreak investigation and provision of laboratory diagnostic services enable the rapid detection and control of infections. Improved diagnostic procedures, unique reference reagents, quality assurance measures and training, enhance the capabilities of the provincial laboratories to participate in a national public health network for the diagnosis of infectious agents. On-going surveillance for seasonal influenza, omnipresent sexually transmitted diseases, newly emerging conditions or non-communicable diseases permit the detection of changing disease patterns and identification of risk factors. From these collective activities, national and international strategies evolve for disease prevention and control.

**AIDS (Acquired Immunodeficiency Syndrome).** The Federal Centre for AIDS (FCA) co-ordinates all governmental activities with respect to the promotion of public education programs, and preventive and social health activities. Other FCA activities include: the promotion of clinical trials of drugs and vaccines; stimulation and encouragement of epidemiological studies, together with the maintenance and improvement of national surveillance; and co-ordination of funding research and community-based support groups. The establishment and maintenance of liaison with all governmental and non-governmental organizations and collaboration with the World Health Organization (WHO) and other international agencies, together with liaison with other national organizations, completes the spectrum of overall activities. The FCA maintains the National Retrovirus Centre, a WHO collaborating centre, which includes the capability to culture peripheral blood lymphocytes for the detection of HIV (Human Immunodeficiency Virus). Reference services for ELISA (Enzyme-linked Immunosorbent

Assay) and confirmatory testing, proficiency testing and quality control at the national level, the evaluation of diagnostic kits and commercially produced reagents, and an extensive training program are also offered.

### 3.2.5 Public health and community health

Health departments, in co-operation with regional and local health authorities, administer such services as environmental sanitation, communicable disease control, maternal and child health, school health, nutrition, dental health, occupational health, public health laboratories and vital statistics. Most provinces have delegated certain responsibilities to health units in rural regions and to municipal health departments in urban centres. Several provinces provide services directly to their thinly populated northern areas.

**Maternal and child health.** Consultant services of health departments co-operate with the public health nursing services. Maternal and child health services also undertake studies and help train nursing personnel. At the local level, public health nurses provide services to mothers, the newborn and children through clinics, home and hospital visits, and school health services.

**Nutrition and health education.** Health departments and some municipal or regional health offices employ nutrition consultants and/or health educators to extend guidance to health and welfare agencies, schools, nursing homes, various community service agencies and other institutions. They provide diet counselling to selected patient groups such as diabetics, and conduct nutritional surveys and other research. Most provincial health departments have a division or unit of health education. Many educational activities are directed to accident prevention, health promotion and to changing habits harmful to health, such as smoking and the excessive use of alcohol and other drugs.

**Dental health.** Public health programs have been largely preventive, but emphasis is now being given to dental treatment. Dental clinics conducted by local health services are generally restricted to preschool and younger school-age groups. A number of provinces send dental teams to remote areas. All provinces have dental care schemes of varying coverage for welfare recipients. Other dental health programs are directed to training dentists, dental hygienists, nurses, therapists and assistants, conducting dental surveys and extending water fluoridation.

**Communicable disease control.** In larger provinces, health departments have divisions of communicable disease control. In others, this function