

Closing Discussion:

BARRIERS TO IMPLEMENTING A HEALTH IMPACT ASSESSMENT

Logistic

- Limited resources – time, money, personnel or facilities
- Who pays for the HIA?
- Who conducts the HIA?
- Should HIA be institutionalized, if so how? Is supporting legislation necessary?

Technical

- Lack of expertise or skills in HIA and the various fields that a particular HIA must draw on (e.g. economics, community planning, environmental chemistry)
- Health departments may have little experience in facilitating public or community involvement
- Uncertainty about the characteristics of the population (esp. joint distribution of risk factors) since the populations of interest in HIA are often small populations that are not sufficiently represented in surveys of health risks, etc.
- High levels of uncertainty about linkages in the causal chain
- Surprises in the evidence base
 - Often less than appears at first glance
 - Format of existing data, often collected for disparate purposes and from different disciplines, may not support full modeling causal chain

Political

- An overly crowded agenda
- Perceptions that HIA may restrict the range of decision options rather than add value or strengthen them
- Perception by the regulated community that HIA is another onerous government burden (i.e. like environmental impact assessment)

(Adapted and expanded from Taylor & Blair-Stevens, 2002)