Centre for Arctic Medicine (CAM) is part of Thule Institute, University of Oulu. The CAM has its origins in the Nordic Secretariat of Arctic Medicine founded in 1969, which was integrated into the structure of the University of Oulu in 1996 and became a part of the Thule Institute in 2001. The present amount of basic personnel is five, consisting of a director, project coordinator, project planner, desk editor and a post-doc position. In addition, a varying amount of doctoral students are employed temporarily at CAM.

The mission of CAM is to improve the sustainable development of health and wellbeing in the circumpolar north. The main fields of its activities are scientific research, research training and distribution of scientific information about health and wellbeing. Our activities focus on factors related to health and wellbeing in northern environments and societies, but also on activities aimed at improving health and reducing illnesses among northern populations. Our host institution, Thule Institute, develops the northern focus of the University of Oulu and operates as a national institute for northern and arctic research.

CAM carries out and supports research that promotes the health of people living in northern regions, and coordinates the Graduate School of Circumpolar Wellbeing, Health and Adaptation. In addition, CAM serves as the editorial office for the International Journal of Circumpolar Health (IJCH), which is the only international scientific journal focused on circumpolar health and wellbeing.

The focus areas of research conducted at CAM are birth cohorts in Northern Finland as a study population for longitudinal follow-up, Finrisk surveys covering the entire Finnish adult population conducted every five years in collaboration with its host organisation, the Institute of Public Health, high-standard climatic laboratories for human research in Kastelli Research Centre, and multidisciplinary collaboration between research insti-
tutes and research groups in clinical medicine, biomedicine, health sciences, sociology and physiology. In addition, CAM carries out projects related to human adaptation physiology in cold environments and the epidemiology of cold-related illnesses.

The Graduate School of Circumpolar Wellbeing, Health and Adaptation coordinated by CAM is highly multidisciplinary, and its research groups represent e.g. the fields of clinical medicine, health sciences, public health science, physiology, linguistics and social sciences. The research projects participating in the Graduate School are divided into three research areas: Risks and adaptation in the circumpolar environment, Health and health care in the north, and Wellbeing in the north. These are further divided into seven research fields: Infections, diseases and injuries, Adaptation, Children and society, Health care in rural areas, Anthropology and the history of circumpolar wellbeing, Northern society and wellbeing, and Minority languages, identities and northern societies.

There are around 80 doctoral students in the Graduate School, five of whom work in the 4-year research training positions funded by the Ministry of Education. Altogether 5 doctoral dissertations were accomplished during year 2003. In addition, 48 peer-reviewed articles in international scientific journals, along with 67 other articles, reviews or abstracts were published by the senior scientists and the doctoral students of the Graduate School. New research projects under the themes Infections and cold, Child development and Development of health care in the northern rural areas were set up with the support of the Graduate School.

In 2004, the main focus of the Centre for Arctic Medicine as a whole is to generate new research in the field of circumpolar health and wellbeing, as its core activities share strong linkages with other research conducted at the Thule Institute and in national and international organisations.

In the Graduate School, one of the main goals will be to further develop the follow-up of the doctoral students’ yearly progress and to activate our doctoral students to participate increasingly in both educational activities and the review process.
Another aim and challenge of the Graduate School will be to successfully organise the 4th International Kastelli Symposium, held in Oulu 19-20 Nov, and along with this event develop our international collaboration in educational activities. The third focus area will be to improve the funding basis of the Graduate School both through our host institution and through an increase in external funding.

The International Journal of Circumpolar Health continues its regular publishing activities, as well as the development activities initiated in 2003 and supported by the Nordic Council of Ministers. In 2004 two regular and two special issues are published. In addition, several supplements issues ordered by various clients will be published. The development activities involve the preparations for establishing an international association of publishers for the journal, as well as improving the editorial and publishing practices.

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