

Health and the climate crisis

(March 2022)

Rationale

Physicians must be able to recognize the effects of the climate crisis (climate change) on human health and take action to mitigate both climate change itself and its health effects on the population, recognizing that many populations are disproportionately affected.

Causal Conditions

(list not exhaustive)

- Climate change has the following effects on health:
 - a. Heat-related illnesses and deaths due to extreme heat
 - b. Malnutrition and dehydration due to the impact on food and water supplies
 - c. Changing burden and nature of infectious diseases due to changes in the vector ecology (e.g., Lyme disease) or changes in water quality (e.g., enteric pathogens)
 - d. Physical, psychological and social consequences
 - e. Health issues for refugees and immigrants due to increased human migration

Key Objectives

- Discuss the effect of climate change on the health of the population in Canada and globally
- Describe how physicians can address climate issues in small-scale settings (e.g., individual practice activities, in a clinic) and large-scale settings (e.g., organization-wide or nation-wide advocacy)
- Appropriately address the physical, psychological and social effects of climate change on the health of the population

Enabling Objectives

- Using Canadian examples, describe the mechanisms by which climate change can affect health (e.g., water scarcity and changing food systems, urbanization, extreme heat events, natural disasters, biodiversity shifts, global pollution, and changing land use and land cover)
- Construct a management plan for individual patients experiencing health-related effects of climate change and other planetary health issues (e.g., mental health concerns, impacts of emerging infectious disease vectors)
- Outline and implement strategies to mitigate adverse health effects of climate change in the local community
- Discuss the contribution of the health care sector to climate change and provide examples of techniques for reducing the impact of health care institutions (e.g., clinics, hospitals) on climate change
- Recognize and address appropriately the unique health problems that a population negatively affected by climate change may encounter