



WHPA STATEMENT ON HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE

The World Health Professional Alliance WHPA brings together the International Council of Nurses the International Pharmaceutical Federation, the World Confederation of Physical Therapy, the FDI World Dental Federation, and the World Medical Association, and speaks for more than 26 million health care professionals in 130 countries. The Alliance works to improve global health and the quality of patient care and facilitates collaboration among the health professions and major stakeholders .

Based on recognised scientific evidences related to the impact of climate change on health, the WHPA is profoundly concerned by its harmful effects, predominantly among vulnerable populations, including the risks of increased malnutrition, death and injury due to natural disasters (e.g. floods and storms), changes in disease patterns and in the ranges and numbers of disease vectors.

Collectively, the health professions have a responsibility for human health and acknowledge that climate change is a critical issue for their professions, and more generally for health systems and health care delivery for both the short- and long-term.

Through their presence at the frontline of health care delivery, based on their unique grass-roots experience and knowledge, health professionals are ready to play a key role in addressing the adverse impacts of climate change on people's health, through actions such as raising awareness, educating individuals and populations, and advocacy and research., Health professionals can also individually adopt behaviours to sustain and protect the natural environment from depletion, pollution, degradation and destruction.

In the context of the coming United Nations talks in Copenhagen and beyond, the WHPA urges world leaders to bring health concerns to the forefront of the climate change debate and calls for strong and tangible measures to address climate change in order to mitigate the serious health risks facing the world, in particular:

Concrete & effective commitments from countries

1. That governments commit to concrete and specific goals for environmental protection, reduction of green house gas production, sustainable development and green adaptation practices, with attention to the right to safe water & sanitation for all.

To address the increasing inequalities in health due to climate change

2. Noting that climate change is likely to amplify inequalities in health, to develop mechanisms to minimize the harms and health inequalities that are globally associated with climate change, in particular to assure that resources transferred to developing countries for climate change include specific funding to support the strengthening of health systems.

To recognise health professionals as critical partners in policy developments on climate change at local, national and international levels

3. To involve health professionals in the development of policies to prevent or reduce the health impact of climate-related emissions, in particular those initiatives that will also improve the general health of the population, including initiatives to stop the privatization of water resources.
4. To include health professionals in environmental health committees and policy tables that focus on the safety and protection of health workers and the management and regulation of health care work environments.
5. To encourage the healthcare community to build professional awareness of the importance of the environment and global climate change to personal, community and societal health.

To mainstream health in climate change policy developments

6. To develop Health Impact Assessment (HIA) of climate change using a combination of procedures, methods and tools and multisectoral approaches in order to determine the impact of policy, project or hazard on a health of a population.

To develop concrete active measures to prevent the adverse effects of climate change on populations.

7. To improve the ability of health professionals and patients to adapt to climate change and catastrophic weather events, through information and education programmes, and to closely involve health professionals in disaster preparedness teams.
8. To develop programmes to combat infectious disease, improve water and sanitation services, and respond to natural disasters and thus help to reduce health vulnerability to future climate change.
9. To develop well-designed urban transport systems to reduce greenhouse gas emissions as well as housing with efficient insulation to cut energy consumption and associated greenhouse gas emissions.
10. To support health professionals to introduce environmentally-friendly practices in health facilities or health care settings, e.g. mercury-free equipment, sorting and safe waste disposal systems.

To intensify research with a focus on vulnerable populations

11. To address the gaps in research regarding climate change and health by undertaking in-depth studies on this area including: i) the burden of disease caused by global climate change, ii) the effects of poorly treated wastewater used for irrigation, and iii) the impact of climate change on vulnerable populations.

To promote national and international cooperation with civil society and other relevant actors

12. To collaborate with NGOs, health professionals, national/international agencies concerned and other relevant participants to develop knowledge about the best ways to mitigate climate change, including those adaptive and mitigation strategies that will result in improved health.