Accelerating the Transition to Climate-Smart Health Care

Georgia Clinicians for Climate Action
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As the only sector with healing as its mission, health care has an opportunity to use its ethical, economic, and political influence to create ecologically sustainable, equitable, and healthy communities.
Health Care Without Harm works to transform health care worldwide so that it reduces its environmental footprint, becomes a community anchor for sustainability and becomes a leader in the global movement for environmental health and justice.

Our reach includes 43,000 hospitals and health centers in 72 countries worldwide.
United States committed to cut its greenhouse gas emissions by 50 to 52 percent relative to 2005 levels by 2030.
More than 4.6 million people living in Georgia, or 48 percent of the state's population, are living in areas at elevated risk of wildfire.

https://statesatrisk.org/
"... Our racial inequality crisis is intertwined with our climate crisis. If we don’t work on both, we will succeed at neither.”

- Ayana Elizabeth Johnson

4th National Climate Assessment
On the front line of climate change
One of the most important synergies between COVID-19 and the climate crisis is the centrality of the health sector at the epicenter of the response.
Climate-Smart Health Care

LEADERSHIP
Leverage the moral, political, and economic influence of the health care sector to change policy and markets.

MITIGATION
Reduce the carbon footprint of hospital operations.

RESILIENCE
Prepare hospital facilities for climate impacts and build community health and resilience.

Healthy people, healthy planet
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Health care’s climate footprint is equivalent to 4.4% of global emissions

https://noharm-uscanada.org/ClimateFootprintReport

Figure 8: Top ten emitters as percentage of global health care footprint.
Global Road Map for Health Care Decarbonization
Charting a global health care course to zero emissions by 2050

Seven high impact actions
1. Power health care with 100% clean, renewable energy
2. Invest in zero emissions buildings and infrastructure
3. Transition to zero emissions, sustainable travel and transport
4. Provide healthy, sustainable food
5. Incentivize and produce low-carbon pharmaceuticals
6. Implement circular health care and sustainable health care management
7. Establish greater health system effectiveness

https://healthcareclimateaction.org/roadmap
Health care contributes to climate change
8.5% of U.S. greenhouse gas emissions. Hospitals contribute one-third of those emissions.
82% of health care emissions in the U.S. are Scope 3*
(Note: This is a sector-wide statistic, not individual hospitals)

*Health Care Pollution and Public Health Damage in the United States: An Update
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U.S. 2020 Billion-Dollar Weather and Climate Disasters

This map denotes the approximate location for each of the 22 separate billion-dollar weather and climate disasters that impacted the United States during 2020.

https://www.ncdc.noaa.gov/billions/
ARE OUR HEALTH CARE FACILITIES AND COMMUNITIES RESILIENT TO EXTREME WEATHER?
A Lesson in Preparedness: Texas Medical Center

2001: Tropical Storm Allison
- Not prepared

2017: Hurricane Harvey
- Open for business

https://noharm-uscanada.org/safehaven
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HEALTHY PEOPLE, HEALTHY PLANET

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Health Care must leverage its influence, purchasing power, and political capital to achieve change quickly and at scale.
We envision health care as a climate-smart, innovative sector that protects public health from climate change and accelerates the transition to a low-carbon economy while improving community resilience, health equity, and access to care.
Join (or start!) a green team for large-scale planning efforts

Carpool, bike, walk, or take public transport

Choose local, sustainable foods & reduce food waste

Reduce OR energy use & waste

Include climate risks in emergency preparedness plans

Educate patients & colleagues

Reduce, reuse, recycle

Educate your community

Plant Trees

Choose local, sustainable foods & reduce food waste

Carpool, bike, walk, or take public transport

How to take action
How do we support the health care sector in creating climate-smart health care?

- Climate and health program initiatives
- Other Health Care Without Harm program initiatives (food, purchasing)
- Practice Greenhealth
- Clinician engagement
What is climate-smart health care?
low carbon + resilient health care

• Sustainable building design and construction
• Renewable energy/energy efficiency
• Waste minimization/sustainable waste management
• Sustainable transport and water policies
• Low carbon procurement for pharmaceuticals, medical devices & food
• Resilience strategies

https://noharm-global.org/issues/global/climate-smart-health-care
CLIMATE ACTION: A Playbook for Hospitals

https://climatecouncil.noharm.org
Health Care Climate Challenge

Mobilizes health care institutions around the globe to protect public health from climate change

Over 300 participants representing 22,000 hospitals and health centers from 36 countries

https://noharm-uscanada.org/healthcareclimatechallenge
Healthy Food in Health Care
Climate-friendly food strategies

• Less meat, better meat -> less emissions
• Food waste
• Sustainable food purchasing

https://noharm-uscanada.org/coolfoodpledge

Sustainable procurement

https://practicegreenhealth.org/sustainableprocurementguide
Practice Greenhealth

https://practicegreenhealth.org
Clinician engagement
Clinician engagement. Why?

- First, do no harm
- Trusted
- White coat influence
- Medical societies
- First, do no harm
- Health experts
- Powerful advocates

Why should clinicians care about climate-smart health care?

- Climate is a public health crisis
- Extreme weather events can impact health care delivery, access and supply chains
- The health care sector contributes to climate change*
-Clinicians can be powerful advocates for climate-smart health care

*“The single largest factor driving health care pollution is clinical care.” – Jodi Sherman M.D.

“As trusted leaders, physicians have a unique opportunity to advance sustainable, climate-smart health care to protect the health of their patients.”

“Physicians have an obligation to use their influence, expertise and resources to protect health, which includes promoting sustainability.” (AMA Journal of Ethics, 2017)
The impact of clinician choices

"With physicians' decisions accounting for 80 cents of every healthcare dollar spent, our choices—including prescribing, device use and the tests we order—can have a real impact on climate change." Modern Healthcare, 2019

https://practicegreenhealth.org/ghg-reduction-toolkit
How do we support and engage clinicians?
Nurses Climate Challenge

A national campaign to mobilize nurses to educate 50,000 health professionals on the impacts of climate change on human health by 2022

https://nursesclimatechallenge.org
Health Care Without Harm Physician Network

A network of physicians interested in reducing the environmental impact of health care delivery and promoting climate-smart health care and other climate solutions

https://noharm.org/physiciannetwork
How do we support our members?

- Fact sheets
- Monthly e-newsletter
- Webinars
- Resource library
- Physicians in action profile series
- Mentorship
- Virtual journal club
- Connecting members
- Working groups
How can clinicians take action?
as individuals, community members, clinicians, hospital staff members

- Individual action
- Hospital/health system
- Clinical practice
- Research
- Media
- Education
- Public policy
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Individual action</th>
<th>Lifestyle &amp; consumer choices, fossil fuel divestment, charitable &amp; campaign donations, vote, talk about climate, join a group</th>
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</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hospital and health system</td>
<td>Start or join a green team, ask leadership to join Practice Greenhealth or Health Care Climate Challenge, lead departmental project, advocate for plant-forward choices</td>
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<tr>
<td>Clinical practice</td>
<td>Patient education; clinical, device use and pharmaceutical choices; waste segregation and reduction, discharge instructions</td>
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<tr>
<td>Research</td>
<td>Health care emissions, health impacts of climate change, journal clubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>Media</td>
<td>Op-Eds, letters to editor, social media, blogs, interviews, podcasts, perspective pieces</td>
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<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>Grand rounds, conferences, curriculum, webinars, community education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Public policy</td>
<td>Meet with legislators, provide testimony, start or join a state clinician climate action group</td>
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5 things you can do

• Get educated
• Connect with sustainability community
• Talk about climate-smart health care
• Ask leadership to join Health Care Climate Challenge
• Ask leadership to join Practice Greenhealth

ACTIVISM IS MY RENT, NOT MY LIVING ON THIS PLANET

-Alice Walker
CleanMed Connect 2021
May 18-20

https://cleanmed.org
At a time when the country is reeling from multiple crises, we need health care to lead the way on the path to a thriving and sustainable society grounded in health, equity, and community resilience.”

Gary Cohen, president and co-founder, Health Care Without Harm
Greg A. Adams, chairman and CEO of Kaiser Permanente
Changing America, September 15, 2020
Thank you!

Any questions or comments please contact me at acollins@hcwh.org

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https://noharm.org