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Medical societies: Climate change harmful to health

by Melissa Jenco, News Content Editor

Eleven medical societies including the Academy are speaking out about the impact of climate change on health.

The **Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health**, which represents half of the nation's physicians, is advocating for renewable energy in a new report being delivered to state and federal leaders as well as medical and business groups.

"Our children deserve the opportunity to raise their own families on a planet that is as safe, as prosperous and as beautiful as the one that we have enjoyed," said Samantha Ahdoot, M.D., FAAP, a member of the AAP Council on Environmental Health Executive Committee. "We have a moral obligation to act on their behalf. Given our current understanding today, failure to take prompt, substantive action to reduce emissions would be an unprecedented injustice to every current and future child."

Roughly 97% of climate scientists agree humans cause climate change, and physicians have found the impacts on health are broad, authors said in the report *Medical Alert! Climate Change Is Harming Our Health*.

Some people experience direct harms such as injuries during severe storms or worsening allergies and asthma due to poor air quality. Changes in temperature and rainfall can lead disease-carrying ticks and mosquitoes to multiply and spread into new areas, according to the report. Heavy rainfall also can lead to the contamination of food and water supplies. In addition, exposure to severe weather can take a toll on mental health, leading to depression, anxiety and post-traumatic stress disorder.

"Doctors in every part of our country see that climate change is making Americans sicker. Physicians are on the frontlines and see the impacts in exam rooms," consortium Director Mona Sarfaty, M.D., M.P.H., FAAFP, said in a news release. "What's worse is that the harms are felt most by children, the elderly, Americans with low income or chronic illnesses, and people in communities of color."

The consortium is urging swift action to prevent additional harm.

"We believe the most important action we can take to protect our health is to accelerate the inevitable transition to clean renewable energy," it said.

Using energy like solar and wind would curb climate change and clean up both the air and water. The group called on doctors to educate the public and policymakers in addition to caring for patients whose health is compromised.

The Academy has been advocating for increased awareness of the impact of climate change on health and released both a **policy** and **technical report** from the **Council on Environmental Health** in 2015 that were written by Dr. Ahdoot. Last year, it convened the first Children's Health Symposium on Climate Change and included climate change in the **AAP Blueprint for Children**.

"A paradigm shift in production and consumption of energy is both a necessity and an opportunity for major innovation, job creation, and significant, immediate associated health benefits," the AAP policy says. "Pediatricians have a uniquely valuable role to play in the societal response to this global challenge."

Resources

- [AAP climate change website](#)



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