

Health-Related Organizations' Positions on Climate Change

Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments signed Health Professional's "Declaration on Climate Change and Health." Photo is from Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments.¹



Aetna: "Going green to protect valuable resources. Helping people stay healthy is our most important mission. And a healthy environment is part of good health. ... Helping our suppliers go green. We help key suppliers find way to improve their green business practices. We do this with an online sustainability assessment tool that measures a supplier's engagement and proficiency level in a broad range of business practices that contribute to sustainability."²

American Heart Association study from February 17, 2016 highlights include: "Stroke may be associated with climate change and air pollution. In a study conducted in the United States and China, the total number of strokes increased as pollution levels rose. Changes in climate may have contributed to the level of air pollution in a region, which in turn contributed to the total number of strokes."³

American Lung Association signed and strongly supports the "Declaration on Climate Change and Health." See [Declaration on Climate Change and Health](#).

Catholic Health Initiatives: Since its founding, CHI has been committed to "environmental responsibility and stewardship that is part of both our Catholic heritage and our mission to build healthier communities. As we witness a changing climate, we must make every effort to strive for sustainable practices that will preserve the earth and all her resources, now and for generations to come."⁴ Catholic Health Initiatives developed "Climate Change and Human Health in the United States."

Climate Change and Human Health in the United States

Catholic Health Initiatives



¹ <http://envirn.org/health-professionals-declaration-on-climate-change-and-health/> and <http://envirn.org/climate-change/>

² <https://www.aetna.com/about-us/corporate-responsibility/aetnas-commitment-healthy-environment.html>

³ <http://newsroom.heart.org/news/number-of-strokes-increase-as-pollution-levels-rise>

⁴ <http://www.catholichealthinitiatives.org/environmental-stewardship>



Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's website provides fact sheets on climate change and lists health impacts.⁵

Dignity Health: In December of 2014, Dignity Health announced its commitment to prepare for the impacts of climate change: "We've always recognized the interdependence between the health of our planet and the health of our people ... This initiative will help our organization ensure that climate change will not interfere with our ability to provide care to those in need."⁶ In February 2016, Dignity Health described how climate change does and will continue to affect our health and our daily lives.



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Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change: "The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) is the international body for assessing the science related to climate change."⁸

Trinity Health Care works in concert with the **Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility (ICCR)**. "As a member of ICCR, Trinity Health has a greater voice to create positive change with other like-minded investors, businesses and organizations from across the country.

Through the lens of faith, ICCR builds a more just and sustainable world by integrating social values into corporate and investor actions. It is a coalition of faith and values-driven organizations that view the management of their investments as a powerful catalyst for social change... In collaboration with ICCR, Trinity Health leverages the power of 'stock' ownership to promote social and environmental change through:



- Writing letters to corporations
- Filing shareholder resolutions
- Dialogue with corporations
- Voting proxies



Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health: "Climate change is one of the most important issues of our time and has major health and healthcare implications. To facilitate the medical community's awareness-raising efforts, the Medical Society Consortium on Climate Change and Health (the

Consortium) brings together associations representing 400,000 clinical practitioners to carry three simple messages:

- Climate change is harming Americans today and these harms will increase unless we act;

⁵ <https://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm>

⁶ <https://www.dignityhealth.org/about-us/press-center/press-releases/climate-change>

⁷ <https://www.dignityhealth.org/articles/climate-change-why-the-environment-is-a-matter-of-public-health>

⁸ <https://www.ipcc.ch>

- The way to slow or stop these harms is to decrease the use of fossil fuels and increase energy efficiency and use of clean energy sources; and
- These changes in energy choices will improve the quality of our air and water and bring immediate health benefits.

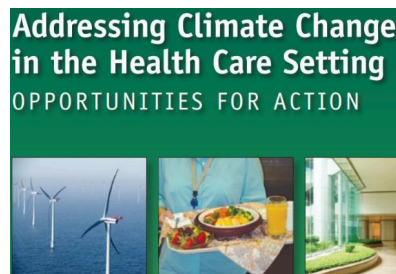
“The 2015 **Lancet Commission on Health and Climate Change**⁹ concluded that addressing climate change is the greatest public health opportunity of the 21st century, and failure to adequately address it could undo most of the progress in global health over the past century. Our recent surveys demonstrate that most physicians are aware of the adverse health effects of climate change and feel a responsibility to inform the public, patients, and policymakers about them. A majority of survey respondents report they are already seeing health harms from climate change among their own patients.”¹⁰—*update with 2017 Lancet reference*



National Institute of Environmental Health

Sciences: “The mission of the NIEHS is to discover how the environment affects people in order to promote healthier lives.”¹¹

The NIEHS partnered on “The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment.”¹² They have a robust portal to locate scientific literature on the health implications of climate change.¹³ Finally, the NIEHS has an environmental stewardship program.¹⁴



American Academy of Family Physicians: “Climate change is happening now, and this has profound implications not just for the planet, but for our health.” AAFP outlines climate change causes and health hazards. “There are already groups that are working to promote awareness and action around climate and human health, including the Medical Society Consortium on Climate and Health.”¹⁵ ... The AAFP, which is a member of the consortium, acknowledges the potential harms a changing planet poses for public health. ...

Climate change represents a clear and present danger to public health, but it also presents a great opportunity for physicians to advocate for patient health. ... By making the case for patient welfare and by advocating to accelerate the transition to clean renewable energy, we help our patients, uphold the high standards of our profession, and become champions for cleaner air and water.”¹⁶

⁹ <https://www.thelancet.com/climate-and-health>

¹⁰ <https://medsocietiesforclimatehealth.org/about/>

¹¹ <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/>

¹² <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/>

¹³ <https://tools.niehs.nih.gov/cchhl/index.cfm>

¹⁴ <https://www.niehs.nih.gov/about/stewardship/index.cfm>

¹⁵ <https://medsocietiesforclimatehealth.org/>

¹⁶ http://www.aafp.org/news/blogs/leadervoices/entry/a_changing_climate_threatens_our.html

US Environmental Protection Agency: “Climate change is having direct and indirect impacts on the health of people. More extreme weather events, heat waves, spread of infectious diseases and detrimental impacts on air and water quality have impacts on our health. Researchers are working to:

- Identify & characterize communities & people at greatest risk to climate change & air pollution
- Assess the individual and synergistic impacts of climate change & air quality on human health.
- Develop approaches to assess the likelihood and effects of extreme events on human health.
- Identify potential societal and behavioral responses to human health risks from climate change.¹⁷

US Global Change Research Program, accompanied by a team of 300 experts and a 60-member federal advisory committee, produced the National Climate Assessment, which includes climate change’s effects on public health.¹⁸



World Health Organization: Between 2030 and 2050, climate change is expected to cause approximately 250,000 additional deaths per year from malnutrition, malaria, diarrhea, and heat stress, and billions of dollars in direct damage costs to health. WHO works with countries across the world to protect the most vulnerable populations from the health effects of extreme weather events, and to increase their resilience to long-term climate change.¹⁹



The Health Care Climate Council Members within Health Care Without Harm advocate for local, state, and national policies that ensure a sustainable and healthy future consistent with their collective vision for healthy individuals and communities. They also mitigate to lower the carbon footprint of hospitals and work to build resilient health systems and communities.

Current Council members include:

Advocate Health

Virginia Mason Health System

Ascension Health

ThedaCare

Boston Medical Center

University Hospitals

Cleveland Clinic

Intermountain Healthcare

Dartmouth-Hitchcock

Kaiser Permanente

Dignity Health

Partners Healthcare

Univ. of Vermont Medical Center

Providence Health and Services

Hackensack University Medical Center

Gunderson Health System

HealthPartners

Inova Health Systems

Seattle Children’s Hospital

¹⁷ <https://www.epa.gov/climate-research/human-health-and-climate-change-research>

¹⁸ <http://nca2014.globalchange.gov/report>

¹⁹ <http://www.who.int/globalchange/mediacentre/news/climate-change-country-profiles/en/>

A Declaration on Climate Change and Health

On April 4, 2016, seventeen organizations came together to urge immediate action to address health impacts due to climate change.²⁰ It was released the same day as the US Global Change Research Program (USGCRP) released its report, “The Impacts of Climate Change on Human Health in the United States: A Scientific Assessment.”²¹ Since then more organizations have signed.²²



As leading public health, patient advocacy, nursing and medical organizations, we reiterate our longstanding commitment to addressing climate change as a public health issue. The statement below articulates our consensus on the health impacts of climate change and the need for action to protect the public's health.

- The health impacts of climate change demand **immediate action**.
- The **science is clear**; communities across the nation are **experiencing the health impacts** of climate change, including:
 - Elevated **ozone** and **particulate** air pollution, linked to asthma attacks, cardiovascular disease, and premature death;
 - **Extreme weather patterns, such as heat and severe storms that cause droughts, wildfires, and flooding** that destabilize communities, especially those least equipped to defend themselves; and

²⁰

<https://www.apha.org/news-and-media/news-releases/apha-news-releases/2016/declaration-on-climate-change-and-health>

²¹ <https://health2016.globalchange.gov/>

²²

<http://www.lung.org/our-initiatives/healthy-air/outdoor/climate-change/a-declaration-on-climate-change-and-health.html>

- Increased **vector-borne diseases** by expanding seasons and geographic ranges for ticks, mosquitoes, and other disease-carrying insects.
- The **most vulnerable** – children, seniors, low-income communities, some communities of color, and those with chronic disease – disproportionately bear the health impacts of climate change.
- **Bold action** is needed to address climate change by cleaning up major sources of carbon pollution and other greenhouse gases, including **power plants**, cars, trucks, and other mobile sources.
- Communities must have the tools and resources to adapt to and **mitigate the unique impacts** of climate change in their communities.
- **We call on President Trump, EPA Administrator Scott Pruitt, and members of Congress** to heed the clear scientific evidence and take steps now to reduce pollution that drives climate change and harms health.
- The public health, disease advocacy, and medical communities are **united in our efforts to protect the public from the risks of climate change**.

Signed

Allergy & Asthma Network
 Alliance of Nurses for Healthy Environments
 American Academy of Pediatrics
 American College of Physicians
 American College of Preventive Medicine
 American Lung Association
 American Public Health Association
 American Thoracic Society
 Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America
 Children's Environmental Health Network

Health Care Climate Council
 Health Care Without Harm
 National Assoc'n of County & City Health Officials
 National Environmental Health Association
 National Medical Association
 Physicians for Social Responsibility
 Public Health Institute
 Trust for America's Health
 US Climate and Health Alliance

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