

HEALTH AND CLIMATE CHANGE: A REVIEW OF THE COLLECTIVE ACTION

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Abstract: *The study highlights the pressing need for collaborative efforts in addressing the intricate relationship between health and climate change. As global temperatures rise and extreme weather events become more frequent, the impact on public health is escalating. From the spread of vector-borne diseases to air pollution and mental health concerns, the implications are vast. This abstract emphasizes the urgency of collective action to mitigate climate change, reduce environmental stressors, and implement sustainable practices to safeguard both human health and the planet. Recognizing the interconnectedness of these issues is crucial for fostering a resilient and sustainable future. Good health is very important to live life. But in today's time, incidents like stroke are taking place - along with this, other health related diseases also arise. One crore people in the world may die from stroke by the year 2050. To overcome these, we have to find the reasons why this is happening? We are giving whatever reasons we can understand.*

Key words: Health, Climate Change, Collective Action, Global Temperatures

Introduction

To prevent catastrophic health consequences and stave off the potential for millions of climate change-induced fatalities, it is imperative for the world to cap the temperature increase at 1.5°C. Historical emissions have already set in motion a degree of global temperature rise and associated climate alterations. Yet, even a global temperature increase of 1.5°C is regarded as precarious. Each additional fraction of a degree of warming will significantly impact the lives and well-being of individuals, underscoring the urgency to limit further temperature escalation. (WHO) In recent years, the interconnection between health and climate change has emerged as a critical global concern. The undeniable impacts of climate change are increasingly affecting our physical well-being, challenging public health systems, and posing significant threats to the delicate balance of our environment. This article delves into the multifaceted relationship between health and climate change, exploring the various dimensions of this complex issue. The convergence of health and climate change presents an imminent global challenge that demands immediate attention and concerted action. The intricate interplay between these two domains has catalyzed a paradigm shift in our understanding of public health, environmental sustainability, and societal well-being. As the Earth's climate continues to undergo unprecedented changes, the ramifications for human health have become increasingly palpable, transcending geographical boundaries and affecting diverse populations worldwide.

According to data from the World Health Organization (WHO), a staggering 2 billion individuals lack access to safe drinking water, and an additional 600 million suffer from foodborne illnesses on an annual basis. Disturbingly, children under the age of 5 account for 30 percent of fatalities resulting from foodborne diseases. The impact of climate stressors further amplifies the risks associated with waterborne and foodborne diseases. In the year 2020 alone, a distressing 770 million people experienced hunger, with the majority situated in Africa and Asia. Climate change compounds the challenges by adversely affecting food availability, quality, and diversity, thereby exacerbating existing food and nutrition crises. The urgency of this intersection lies in the multifaceted impacts that climate change exerts on health. Rising temperatures have ushered in a new era of environmental challenges, amplifying the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, disrupting ecosystems, and reshaping disease patterns. Heatwaves, once sporadic occurrences, now pose a pervasive threat to vulnerable communities, leading to heat-related illnesses and fatalities. Concurrently, shifts in precipitation patterns, prolonged droughts, and intensified storms have propelled issues such as water scarcity, food insecurity, and the spread of waterborne diseases. The nexus between climate change and health extends far beyond these immediate impacts. Air pollution, largely driven by anthropogenic activities, permeates landscapes, polluting the air we breathe and significantly impacting respiratory health. Vector-borne diseases, propelled by changes in temperature and humidity, encroach upon territories previously untouched by these ailments, posing new challenges for healthcare systems globally.

Furthermore, mental health concerns stemming from the existential threats and aftermath of climate-related disasters add another dimension to this complex interrelationship. Amid these challenges, the call for collective action reverberates louder than ever. Recognizing the urgency and magnitude of the issue, collaboration across sectors, nations, and communities becomes imperative. Mitigating the effects of climate change on health necessitates a holistic approach, intertwining environmental stewardship with public health strategies. It demands innovative solutions, policy interventions, and a reimagining of societal norms to build resilience against the impacts of a changing climate. WHO leads in emphasizing climate change's health implications, aiming to centralize health in climate policies, including

through the UNFCCC. Partnering with major health agencies, health professionals and civil society, WHO strives to embed climate change in health priorities like UHC and target carbon neutrality by 2030.

Findings

Surveys designed to assess public backing for climate action reveal notable trends. The Peoples' Climate Vote conducted by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) encompassed 1.2 million participants across 50 countries, representing 56 percent of the global population. Results indicated that nearly two-thirds of respondents expressed support for various climate action measures. In the surveyed Least Developed Countries, 58 percent favored climate action, while high-income countries demonstrated even stronger support at 72 percent. The most widely endorsed actions included the conservation of land and forests (54 percent support) and the expansion of solar and wind energy (53 percent). Conversely, promoting plant-based diets (30 percent) and advocating for climate insurance (32 percent) were less popular choices. About 39 percent of participants believed that companies should bear the cost of their pollution. Notably, the survey did not inquire about sentiments regarding a carbon tax, including potential impacts on individuals, nor did it explore the monetary commitment respondents were willing to make for these proposed actions. According to the Yale 2020 Public Opinion Estimate, 57 percent of individuals in the United States believe that human activities primarily cause global warming, while a substantial 72 percent acknowledge its occurrence. Additionally, a noteworthy 68 percent expressed support for imposing a carbon tax on fossil fuel companies.

To confront the challenges of climate change, a substantial increase in ambition is imperative across all levels. While notable progress has been observed globally with increased investments in renewable energy, it is evident that more comprehensive efforts are required. A transformative shift is necessary in the energy, industry, transport, food, agriculture, and forestry sectors to effectively curtail global temperature escalation, ideally aiming for a limit well below 2°C, and possibly as low as 1.5°C. The initial stride towards this goal was taken in December 2015 with the adoption of the Paris Agreement, signifying a collective commitment by all nations to combat climate change. However, it is crucially evident that additional and sustained actions are requisite to meet these ambitious targets (UN SDG).

Rising Temperatures and Health Implications

As the world experiences a continuous rise in temperatures, the health risks associated with heat-related illnesses and diseases have escalated. Heatwaves, once occasional, have become more frequent and intense, contributing to a surge in heat-related illnesses such as heatstroke and dehydration. Vulnerable populations, including the elderly and those with pre-existing health conditions, face heightened risks.

Vector-Borne Diseases and Changing Climate

Changes in temperature and humidity patterns influence the spread of vectors like mosquitoes and ticks, thereby expanding the geographical range of diseases such as malaria, dengue fever, and Lyme disease. Populations in previously unaffected regions are now grappling with the emergence of these once-tropical diseases.

Extreme Weather Events and Public Health

The increase in the frequency and severity of extreme weather events, such as hurricanes, floods, and wildfires, poses immediate threats to public health. Displacement, injuries, and the breakdown of healthcare infrastructure in the aftermath of such events create a breeding ground for infectious diseases and mental health challenges.

Air Quality and Respiratory Health

The degradation of air quality, primarily driven by increased industrial activities and the burning of fossil fuels, contributes to respiratory illnesses and exacerbates pre-existing conditions like asthma. Fine particulate matter and pollutants not only affect human health but also disrupt ecosystems, impacting biodiversity.

Water Scarcity and Waterborne Diseases

Climate change-induced shifts in precipitation patterns and prolonged droughts contribute to water scarcity, compromising hygiene and sanitation. Lack of access to clean water facilitates the spread of waterborne diseases, affecting millions globally.

Food Security and Nutrition

Changes in temperature and precipitation patterns impact agricultural productivity, leading to food insecurity. Altered nutritional content in crops, along with disruptions in the food supply chain, contributes to malnutrition and other health issues.

Impact on Vulnerable Populations

Findings emphasize the disproportionate impact of climate change on vulnerable populations, including low-income communities and marginalized groups. Understanding the differential vulnerabilities is crucial for designing inclusive and equitable public health strategies.

Impact on Mental Health

The tangible and existential threats posed by climate change, coupled with the aftermath of extreme weather events, contribute to a growing mental health crisis. Anxiety, depression, and post-traumatic stress disorders are on the rise, necessitating a holistic approach to address the mental health implications of climate change.

Conclusion

As we navigate the intricate web of health and climate change, it is imperative to recognize the urgency of collective action. Mitigating the impacts of climate change requires a concerted effort to reduce carbon emissions, embrace sustainable practices, and prioritize the well-being of our planet. A resilient public health response must adapt to the evolving challenges posed by climate change, ensuring the protection of individuals and communities worldwide. Only through a harmonious balance between environmental stewardship and human health can we secure a sustainable and healthier future for generations to come.

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