

Climate Change and Health Threats

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Abstract

Potential health risks due to climate change are not entirely unanticipated and have been warned of by scientists and researchers for decades. As the effects of climate become more pronounced, there is growing evidence of its severe impact on human health. This paper will focus on the indicators, specific health issues, the people who are affected the most, and various companies' initiatives towards alleviating this issue.

Keywords: health risks, climate change, impact, indicators, companies' initiatives

Everything in our world, from the flora and fauna to the environment to human society, has been accustomed to a specific range of temperatures, where living organisms thrive and function optimally. Any minimal deviation from this can result in profound effects on the balance and stability of the ecosystem as a whole. Greenhouse gases emitted into our environment due to a variety of reasons and sources have raised the temperature of the earth to a point where damage is taking place to the environment, like the melting of polar ice caps, and to human health, like the increased occurrence of skin cancer. The climate clock has been based on the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC), a scientific organization set up to monitor and assess all global science related to climate change, and is shown to have approximately six years to keep the warming under the 1.5-degree Celsius threshold. The Paris agreement was adopted on December 12, 2015, by 196 parties at the UN Climate Change Conference (COP21) in France. Their goal was to hold the global temperature below 2 degrees Celsius and limit its increase to 1.5 degrees Celsius, above pre-industrial levels. Our earth will suffer irreparable harm if global warming exceeds 1.5-degrees Celsius, and we will start to free-fall into the abyss of climatic collapse and disaster. Global heating of even 1.5-degrees Celsius is perilous. In fact, every additional tenth of a degree of warming will take a serious toll on people's lives and health [1].

Climate change depends on a variety of socioeconomic and environmental factors. Even though the actual health outcome is challenging to keep records of, tracking changes in climate impacts and exposures enhances understanding of changes in risk to health. By recognizing changing risks, officials can better understand the situation we currently endure or will endure in the future. Thus, even where health data are lacking or where the links between climate and health outcomes are complex, indicators play an important role in accurately estimating the scale and impact of many climate-sensitive health risks [2].

Climate change affecting human health can be classified in two ways, namely, by increasing the frequency of health problems due to climate or weather, and by creating new health problems in places where they have not previously struck, including an increase in zoonoses, vector-borne diseases, as well as persistent mental health problems like post-traumatic stress disorder or anxiety disorders. Extreme weather events are also becoming more frequent, causing serious injuries as well as deaths. Impacts on human health are

caused by a number of important weather and climatic elements. Longer-lasting extreme heat events increase the chance of drought, wildfire, and air pollution risks. More extreme rain, snow, and intense storms produce flooding, drought, and ecosystem changes. Rising sea levels exacerbate coastal flooding and storm surges, causing injuries, stress due to evacuations, and illness due to contamination of water. Climatic variability will likely exacerbate the effects of weather and climatic events that already pose a threat to human health in some regions while creating new climate-related health risks in other unaffected regions. [1,3].

While no one is immune to these climate intoxications, the people whose health is being primarily are the ones who contribute the least to its causes and are least able to defend themselves from it due to lack of resources or even education. To be specific, people in low-income and disadvantaged countries and communities are the most harmed. The most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups, such as racial and ethnic minorities, poor communities, migrants, elderly, and people with underlying health issues, are disproportionately affected by this issue. In the short- to medium-term, the susceptibility of populations, their resilience, their pace of adaptation will all play a significant role in determining the health implications of chunks of populations or individuals. In the longer-term, the effects will increasingly depend on the extent to which transformational action is taken to avoid the potential irreversible tipping points. The key factors that determine a person's risk are age, underlying physical conditions, underlying mental conditions, their socioeconomic status, lack of access to communities of color, and location of residence [1,3].

Recognizing the depth of this issue, several sectors and companies have taken the initiative to start campaigns and workshops to further this message, calling out to people to be mindful of their carbon footprint in their everyday lives and to take necessary precautions in the meantime. The National Institutes of Health (NIH) created the Climate Change and Health Initiative to reduce health risks from severe temperatures and boost health resilience across nations worldwide. With an emphasis on health equality, the Alliance for Community Engagement on Climate and Health (ACE-CH) will aim to advance sustainable methods that address the effects of climate change on vulnerable communities. In order to accomplish this, they have received funding from the NIH to establish four sites. Further, they will concentrate on community-engaged research, capacity building, and outreach opportunities where factors associated with social determinants of health yield residents disproportionately affected by the health impacts of climate change. Along with the World Hospital Congress, the International Hospital Federation is making a call to action to address climate change as a crucial component of healthcare delivery. Further, Unilever and Apple have pledged to become carbon neutral by 2039 and invest in renewable energy. Microsoft has pledged to become carbon negative by 2030 by eradicating higher amounts of carbon from the atmosphere than it emits. Amazon has pledged to be net-zero carbon by 2040 by purchasing electric delivery vehicles [4].

The climate crisis threatens to undo the last five decades of progress in development, global health, and poverty reduction, and to further widen existing health inequalities within populations. Companies all over the world from a wide range of sectors are increasingly involved in reducing their carbon footprint and implementing sustainable practices. Additionally, governments are enacting stricter regulations and

providing incentives to encourage businesses to adopt greener strategies, fostering a global movement towards a more sustainable future. [1]

References

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