Climate Change: A Public Health Priority

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In this issue of the journal we present a series of articles on Global Environmental Change and Human Health sponsored by the United Nations University. Climate change remains the most serious threat to public health during the remainder of this century. Every public health worker needs to ask himself or herself about the kind of world and the burden on disease that we are leaving to our children.

The Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) was established by the United Nations and provides the best available information on climate change.¹ Its findings are supported by all scientific organizations and almost all national governments. Their recent support provides further evidence on the need for action. Some governments have committed to action on renewable energies and recently Denmark was able to announce that its wind generators had provided more than enough power for the whole country for several days. China has announced plans to make progress in sustainable energy provision. However, other governments, such as Australia, are taking backward steps and not meeting their international commitments. Now the Second Lancet Global Commission on Climate Change has laid out a framework for public health action on climate.²,³

This journal is a strong advocate for action to mitigate the health effects of climate change. We are too late to avoid any climate change with zero health impacts, but we must limit it and take care of those who will be most badly affected.

The fact of climate change is now incontrovertible, as is the link with adverse nutrition and health outcomes. In this supplement, the United Nations University researchers provide more supporting evidence for public health action. We hope as the world governments gather in Paris in December for the Climate Summit that they will put aside short-term politics and commit themselves to act for the health of the citizens of the world.

References


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