



January Campaign Action Pack – Healthy Planet

Climate change is a global health issue; it is also a public health issue for the UK. The health profession has a potentially important role to play in tackling climate change. This month's campaign actions are focused on mobilising the health profession.

January Actions

1. *Sign the pledge yourself, and get your branch and branch members to sign as well*
2. *Write a letter to the dean of your medical school urging them to sign the pledge and join the Climate and Health Council as an institutional member*

See the last two pages for a sample letter to your medical school dean and for the declaration in full.

What is the Climate and Health Council? What is the Declaration? And Why Sign It?

The Climate and Health Council: The Council (<http://www.climateandhealth.org/>) is an international organisation led by a board of health professionals and health academics concerned about climate change and health. Much like Medsin, their focus is action. They are the leading group in mobilising the health profession against climate change. Their **Declaration** (<http://www.climateandhealth.org/getinvolved/pledge/> - See Page 4)) forms the basis of the health professional campaign for climate change.

Awareness and Changing Mindsets: Campaigning for change is more than just policy. It is changing the mindsets and presumptions of people and institutions. The declaration is not a drastic change in medical school policy; it is an acknowledgement and appreciation of the link between climate change and health, and an acceptance of its importance to national and global public health.

Cohesiveness in the Wider Project: The Climate and Health Council is one of the frontrunners in the campaign and within the council is a collaboration of many different climate and health groups, Medsin included. The best way we can all move forward is together. Campaigning for awareness and change within Medical Schools is all well and good, but if we can convey the idea that we are part of a wider network and that this change is part of a greater project, then I feel that the change that we achieve will be that much more productive.

Why have medical schools join the Climate and Health Council as Institutions?

A Bottleneck for Doctors in Training: Medical schools are the training ground for the future of doctors in the UK. They have a massive influence on how and what we think. If we are exposed to the link between climate change and health as just another part of our medical training, then that link is given a level of validity that student- to- student contact and advocacy simply cannot reach. The link does not have to be added to our medical education; the medical school signing up to this declaration is enough, for the moment.

A Unique Niche: Medical students make up the bulk of Medsin and this campaign. Our very unique niche is that of medical schools. The cohesiveness between medical students and medical schools means that we as students have an opportunity like no other to advocate for change.

An Integral Part of the Health Profession: Mobilisation of the health profession is one of the key aims in the ‘bigger picture’ Climate & Health Campaign. As the first building block in the health profession, medical schools must be one of the first institutions to register their acknowledgement of the climate and health link and its importance.

What next?

The Declaration obviously isn’t the be all and end all of the campaign; it is just a foundation to build on. “What next” essentially constitutes the entire Healthy Planet approach to Medical Schools, when you think about it! The main areas are

Medical Education: Integrating Climate Change & Health into the curriculum, whether Core or via Student Modules.

Get your Medical Schools Actively ‘On Board’: Don’t just let them sit around feeling smug because they’ve openly acknowledged the climate change & health link – make them do something! Get them to sign your letters to the DoH or GMC; get them to lobby for you, or alongside you; get them to sponsor events or even small-conferences on Climate Change & Health. Whatever you do, if your medical school has signed up to this declaration, get them to support you.

Get in contact with the Climate & Health Council: Let them know that your medical school is now on the same side as them and that it would be useful if there was more contact between the two groups. One of the aims of getting medical schools to sign the declaration is to improve cohesiveness, after all!

Further Information

1. Contact me for anything at all, and especially let me know if anything is missing off here so I can change it. Mustafa Abbas; healthyplanet@medsin.org; 07999 434 377
2. Climate & Health Council - <http://www.climateandhealth.org/>

3. Membership Form (sign up) - http://www.climateandhealth.org/members/membership_new.asp

LETTER TO MEDICAL SCHOOL DEANS

Dear <medical school dean>,

I am writing as a Medical Student, concerned with Climate Change as a growing threat to National and Global Health, to urge the <University Name> Medical School to Get on Board in the campaign against Climate Change by signing the Climate and Health Council's Pledge and joining the Council as an institutional member.

Climate Change will have a profound impact on global health. It will increase the intensity and frequency of extreme weather events; floods and natural disasters; droughts, desertification and famine; and consequently have a severely adverse impact on worldwide malnutrition. Rising sea levels alone will create hundreds of millions of environmental migrants, as well as destroying arable land. Conflict will increase as a result of resource scarcity and competition and mass migration.

National Health in the UK will be negatively affected also. As a developed country we are able to adapt to reduce the negative health impacts, but only to an extent. Importantly for public health in the UK, the health co-benefits that we would gain from lower carbon living (such as walking more, or eating healthier) would greatly improve public health. What's more, the cost co-benefits of carbon reduction strategies are significant, especially for high carbon emitters such as hospitals. Looking at climate change through the perspective of public health gives urgency for the health profession to be mobilised against such a threat.

Medical schools have a key role to play in the campaign against climate change. As the training ground for the future of doctors in the UK, medical schools have a profound influence on how and what doctors think. Because of this, as the cohesiveness between medical students and their school, for a medical school to portray climate change as a public health issue will give it a sense of meaning and importance that no other institution or person ever could. Medical schools are an integral part of the medical profession and mobilisation of this profession is crucial if climate change is to be seen through a health perspective.

I strongly urge you to acknowledge the important part that medical schools have in this growing national and global problem by signing the <University Name> Medical School up to the Climate and Health Council's Pledge and joining the council as an institutional member.

Yours Sincerely,

Students, Sympathetic Staff & Academics

Declaration of the Climate and Health Council

We as health professionals and health managers, concerned about the effects of climate change on global health and the environment;

- Recognising that the factors leading to climate change threaten the basic elements of life for both present and future generations, including access to food, water, shelter, clean air and health;
- Aware that declining crop yields, especially in the poorest countries of the world, could leave many millions without the ability to produce or purchase enough food to sustain healthy life;
- Appreciating that climate change-induced sea level rises, flooding and drought, will lead to the displacement and suffering of hundreds of millions of people and could spark national or international conflict;
- Familiar with the scientific evidence indicating that climate change will increase the spread of vector-borne diseases such as malaria and dengue fever;
- Knowing that most of the health burden of climate change is borne by women and children in developing countries
- Conscious of the uncertainties in predicting the impacts of man made climate change on health and the environment, and the risks of major irreversible changes with important consequences;
- Appreciating that substantial reductions in greenhouse gas emissions are urgently required to reduce the risks of serious climate change
- Recognising that population stabilisation is fundamental to both global efforts to mitigate climate change and the ability to adapt to it
- Aware that in the countries responsible for most greenhouse gas emissions, policies to reduce carbon emissions have the potential to bring important public health benefits, through increases in physical activity, improvements in air quality, decreases in road traffic injuries, increased home energy efficiency and the adoption of diets that contain less animal products;

Call on governments of the world to put in place a global framework such as the Global Commons Institute's Contraction and Convergence to cap the emissions of greenhouse gases such that the atmospheric concentration of CO₂ does not rise above 450 ppm;

Call on governments of the world to transfer resources to the poorest populations of the world so that they can adapt to the climate impacts that are now unavoidable as a result of anthropogenic greenhouse gas emissions and can meet their development needs, including population stabilisation, without further contributing to adverse health and environmental impacts at a local and global level;

Call on individual health professionals to measure and reduce their own carbon footprint and to push for health-related institutions to adopt sustainable practices, recognising that in doing so we will be greatly enhancing the persuasive power of our advocacy as well as contributing to the transition to a low carbon world;

Call on research institutions to invest resources in exploring the most effective way of reducing carbon;

Call on all health professionals and other professional groups to join in supporting this declaration and to take urgent action on this issue within their own spheres of influence.