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Planetary health – the connections between public health and climate change

ABSTRACT

The climate crisis and its consequences represent the greatest challenge facing human health and health care system in the 21st century. It threatens to undermine the last decades of health gains. Rising temperatures, fires, floods and droughts can directly and indirectly cause human pathologies, that are physical and mental. Extreme weather events lead to loss of life, basic life resources and cause severe mental burden. More intense and frequent heat waves due to global warming impact human health and increase mortality, especially for those most vulnerable. The heat-related health risk depends on individual state of health as well as environmental and socioeconomic characteristics of residential areas. Increasing exposure to air pollutants, due to wildfires and anthropogenic emissions, raises respiratory and cardiovascular mortality. Climate warming changes ecosystems and enhances biological invasions that can better adapt to warm environments. Pathogen profiles are changing, transmission and spread of vector-borne diseases as Malaria or Dengue are increasing. Further, rising temperatures and air pollution increase the production and allergenicity of pollen, associated with higher prevalence of allergic diseases. Protective environmental factors, as biodiversity or diverse microbiome, should be given greater consideration in future research.



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