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Climate Change: A Public Health Issue

Syed Arsalan Ali*, Syeda Aimen Waqar, Sidra Jamal, Sajid Ali and Syed Bilal Hashmi

Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan

*Corresponding author: Syed Arsalan Ali, Resident Physician, Dow University of Health Sciences, Karachi, Pakistan, Tel: + 923002151979; E-mail: syedarsalanali1@gmail.com

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Abstract

Climate change, and its health consequences, can be combated with mitigation and adaptation like reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing action plans in extreme conditions, gathering more information on risks, identifying most effective measures and ameliorating surveillance of animal diseases. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines "climate change" as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods".

Keywords: Climate change; Health consequences; Greenhouse gas

Increases in heat and extreme weather condition like floods and rainfall brought on by climate change makes ripe conditions for different food, water and vector borne diseases like Cholera, leptospirosis and campylobacter enteritis, Cryptosporidiosis, tickborne encephalitis, malaria and malnutrition [3].

Climate change has also increased surface-level ozone concentrations a harmful air pollutant, and a component in smog, in already polluted areas as ground-level ozone is formed when certain air pollutants, such as carbon monoxide, oxides of nitrogen and volatile organic compounds, are exposed to each other in sunlight [4].

High levels of pollution are linked with increased cardiac problems. Air temperature and ozone are detrimental for heart because they influence the way the automatic nervous system functions. Increased carbon dioxide and longer growing seasons results in higher pollen production, worsening allergic and respiratory disease. While genetics plays a large role in all allergies, a longer and intense pollen season exacerbate symptoms [5].

Climate change, and its health consequences, can be combated with mitigation and adaptation like reducing greenhouse gas emissions and developing action plans in extreme conditions, gathering more information on risks, identifying most effective measures and ameliorating surveillance of animal diseases. Help can be sought from popular media like films and television in sensitizing the masses. If we do not act now our future generations will bear the consequences and we will bear the blame.

Letter to Editor

In the last 50-100 years, human activity such as industry, agriculture and transportation have begun to affect the natural climate balance. These activities are not only causing the Earth to heat up, but to do that at an unprecedented rate. The World Health Organization estimates that anthropogenic climate change claim over 150,000 lives annually [1]. The United Nations Framework Convention on Climate Change (UNFCCC) defines climate change as "a change of climate which is attributed directly or indirectly to human activity that alters the composition of the global atmosphere and which is in addition to natural climate variability observed over comparable time periods".

Heat exposure has a range of health effects, from mild heat rashes to deadly heat stroke and dehydration. Excessive heat impacts populations in northern latitudes more who are less prepared to face excessive temperatures. The young, old, sick and poor are more vulnerable to heat-related illness. Urban areas are typically warmer, climate change turn the temperature in cities even higher. This increases the demand for electricity thus combustion of fossil fuels generating massive air pollution [2].

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