

Emerging Global Health Crisis of our times- Climate change.

Editorial

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The progress of the human race over the last 200 years is unprecedented in recent history. Rapid industrialization, urbanization, and consumerism have made lives easier for humankind. Still, these changes come at a very high price. We never anticipated that we will have to pay the price in the form of climate change and global warming. Our planet, the earth is getting warmer by 0.85° centigrade annually for the last one hundred and seventy years. Hence, glaciers are melting faster than ever, water levels are rising, and cities are sinking, while greenhouse gas emission numbers are at their highest points in human history. Unfortunately we humans are living in anthropogenic epoch and are also speeding up the destruction of the earth's ecosystem by being the dominant cause of the warming observed since the 20th century.^[1-3] Deforestation coupled with increased greenhouse gas emissions has led to a surge of heat-waves globally. These environmental disasters not only affect the environment, plants, and land but also have a profound direct and indirect impact on the health of people. In-fact the health impact has already debuted in the form of worsening key health indicators. In Pakistan alone, the 2015 heat-wave claimed the lives of twelve hundred people in Sindh province.^[4] Due to variable rainfall patterns that affect the availability of fresh water, it also affects food production & delivery and brings on the drought.^[5] Quality of air, clean drinking water, and availability of food are the top three indicators most influenced by these disasters.^[6] Coupled with these, the more than the frequent occurrence of natural calamities; tsunamis, wildfires, snowstorms, and extremes of temperatures has put an extra financial burden on already, stretched to limits budgets of health.

Looking at health climate relationships, any change in climate directly influences the temporal distribution of vector-borne diseases, increasing their epidemic potential. The most common examples of such diseases are Malaria & Dengue fever.^[7] Rising temperature and globalization can bring back or intensify the spread of malaria in humid and

and temperate nation-states that have either eradicated or controlled the vector-borne transmission mechanisms, leading to an epidemic for which these countries are unprepared.^[8] In Pakistan, nineteen thousand cases of dengue and thirty mortalities were reported by the National Institute of Health, Pakistan, in the year 2019 which is quite alarming.^[9] Speaking about the quality of air, in the preceding hundred years, the world has seen an exponential rise in air pollution leading to more frequent respiratory ailments. Air pollution and greenhouse gas emissions are becoming a leading cause of lung and skin malignancies.^[10] It also considered as the major environmental risk factor in the incidence and progression of some diseases such as asthma, lung cancer, ventricular hypertrophy, Alzheimer's and Parkinson's diseases, psychological complications, autism, retinopathy, fetal growth, and low birth weight.^[11] It's never too late to make a start. If the carbon emission & deforestation are not controlled, the temperatures will continue to rise, the earth could become hotter by 2° in the next 30 years. Earth is our only home, and there is no Planet B for humans. We do not have a choice but to slow deforestation and plant more trees.^[12] Although, in Africa, Pakistan, India, and United Kingdom, initiatives have been taken on a government level with successes, yet they are not adequate.^[13]

The world needs to realize that this is the most serious health crisis of this era; we have to work on war footings, with nations joining hands in this war against the emerging global health crisis, the climate crisis. Minimizing our carbon footprint is the only viable option. The countries that produce more greenhouse gas emissions must be held accountable.^[14] We are the generation faced with some tough decisions, and it is up to us to either leave a



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better place for our children or a world where a child will have to fight to survive.

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