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American Academy of Nursing Releases Policy Brief on Reducing Health Problems Due to Climate Change

Nurses Essential to Reducing, Responding to Climate Change Health Issues

Washington, D.C. (May 21, 2018) — The American Academy of Nursing urges action to address climate change to reduce adverse effects on public health. In its recently released policy brief, the Academy makes a series of recommendations that harness the full potential of nurses to minimize climate change consequences.

Communities experience climate change as increased frequency and intensity of wildfires, heat waves, winter storms, hurricanes, and floods, as well as changes in the way disease is transferred from individual to individual. Climate- and weather-related conditions affect health conditions as diverse as asthma, sudden cardiac death, premature birth, gastrointestinal illness, depression, malnutrition, and vector-borne illness. Economically, the United States' health-care spending for diseases caused by air pollution totaled 3.5% of total health expenditures in 2013. The percentage is more than double in Sri Lanka, the only low-income country with available data.

“As the largest group of health professionals in the United States, and more than 20 million worldwide, nurses play an essential role in implementing climate strategies of mitigation and resilience, as well as interventions after climate events,” said Academy President Karen Cox, PhD, RN, FAAN. “The Academy calls on the nursing profession to include strategies to reduce climate change impacts through patient assessment and clinical care, research, advocacy, policy-making, and work with communities to strengthen resilience.”

The Academy’s policy brief, “Nurses Play Essential Roles in Reducing Health Problems Due to Climate Change,” was published in the March/April 2018 issue of the Academy’s journal, *Nursing Outlook*.

The Academy recommends policies that address upstream opportunities to reduce pollution and create the best possible climate scenarios for future generations, and downstream needs related to disaster response and the essential role of nurses in saving lives during extreme weather events. Upstream suggestions focus on promoting sustainable practices in all sectors of the economy and increasing public awareness of the evidence linking their health to climate health. Downstream recommendations address climate adaptation and response, including policies for increased research funding, education and professional development for healthcare workers, and incorporating climate change and health into clinical practice.

Read the full policy brief: <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.outlook.2018.02.008>

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The American Academy of Nursing (www.AANnet.org) serves the public and the nursing profession by advancing health policy and practice through the generation, synthesis, and dissemination of nursing knowledge. The Academy’s more than 2,500 fellows are nursing’s most accomplished leaders in education, management, practice, and research. They have been recognized for their extraordinary contributions to nursing and healthcare.

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