

PLANETARY HEALTH

THE HEALTH OF HUMAN CIVILISATION AND THE SYSTEMS UPON WHICH IT DEPENDS

Climate Change is the greatest global health threat and opportunity of the 21st century.¹

The climate emergency is rapidly undermining the future survival of all species²

If global healthcare were a country it would be the 5th largest emitter of carbon in the world³

Doctors and nurses remain the most trusted professions in society⁴

Family Doctors have been called on to act and lead on Planetary health⁵
globalfamilydoctor.org

WHAT GPs CAN DO: PRESCRIBING AND PATIENT CARE



PRESCRIBING

This can account for over 65% of the carbon footprint in General Practice.⁶ Prescription reviews reduce unnecessary medications. Advise re safe medication disposal.



INHALERS

Metered dose inhalers have a carbon footprint x18 times that of dry powdered inhalers. Inhaler propellant gases are highly potent Greenhouse gases which are 1480-2900 as potent as Co2.⁷ Practical tips and further breakdown at greeninhaler.org



ANTIBIOTICS

Antibiotic resistance poses a threat to our health and the planet. The animal food industry uses large amounts of antibiotics many of which are human grade. Being mindful of what we consume as well as what we prescribe can help safeguard our antibiotics antibioticprescribing.ie



LIFESTYLE ADVICE

80% of chronic disease is preventable by addressing diet and lifestyle factors⁸



ACTIVE AND SOCIAL PRESCRIBING

Promoting active transport, nature and social based interventions, improves well being, reduces depression and stress related symptoms.⁹⁻¹⁰



PLANT BASED DIET

Food production accounts for almost 26% of global carbon emissions.¹¹ Avoiding animal products for two out of three meals could reduce emissions by 60%.¹² Plant based diets are consumed by the longest living and healthiest populations around the world.¹³



WHAT GPs CAN DO: IN THE PRACTICE



LEADERSHIP

ROLE MODEL

ADVOCACY

Check out Planetary health on ICGP.ie for more information

WASTE

Ensure everyone in the practice is aware of the recycling and waste policy. Yellow waste bags require large amounts of energy to process. Tackle single use plastics where possible.



OFFICE

Consider switching to renewable energy. Save up to 30% off your energy bill by becoming more energy efficient. Turning down the thermostat by 1 degree can save 10% from your heating bill. Using low energy light bulbs can cut lighting costs by up to 20%.



ECO COMMUNICATIONS

Covid 19 has proven much of our workload can be performed virtually, avoiding patient travel. Opt for email/text over paper. Double copy/print, recycle and use sustainably sourced paper.



USE OF RESOURCES

Avoiding waste and promoting value are about quality of care, not shortcuts. Advanced planning directives comply with patient wishes and avoid unwanted hospital journeys. Agree a practice policy on blood tests, radiology referrals, screening etc. www.choosingwisely.org is an excellent resource.



¹ Latest Countdown report 2020

² A future for the world's children? The Lancet Vol 395 February 22, 2020. 605.

³ Health Care's Climate footprint- Health Care Without Harm Green Paper 2019

⁴ Ipsos MORI Veracity Index 2020

⁵ Declaration Calling for Family Doctors of the World to Act on Planetary Health, WONCA 2019

⁶ NHS Sustainable development unit. Carbon Hotspots, 2018

⁷ Inhaled drugs and global warming, BMJ DOI:10.1136

⁸ Healthy living is the best revenge: Findings from the EPIC and Nutrition- Potsdam study, Ford ES et al. ; Arch Intern Med 2009

⁹ Green prescriptions and their co-benefits: integrative strategies for public and environmental health, Robinson J et al. Challenges, 2019

¹⁰ Social prescribing: where is the evidence? Husk K et al. Br J Gen Pract. 2019;69(678):6-7.

¹¹ Reducing food's environmental impacts through producers and consumers. Poore, J. et al. Science, 2018

¹² Multiple health and environmental impacts of foods; Clark M et al; PNAS November 12, 2019

¹³ Blue Zones: Lessons From the World's Longest Lived. Buettner D et al. American Journal of Lifestyle Medicine. 2016