



the campaign for
environmentally responsible
health care

NEWS RELEASE

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Health Care Sector Leaders Urge Obama to Deliver “Prescription for Healthy Planet” to Reduce Health Effects of Climate Change

New York Times Ad Warns: “Climate Change May Be Hazardous to Your Health”

(Washington, DC) One month before climate change talks begin in Copenhagen, leaders of the nation’s health care sector are calling on President Obama to put public health at the forefront of climate negotiations.

In an advertisement in today’s issue of *The New York Times*, health care leaders representing millions of American health professionals, including the American Nurses Association, the American Public Health Association, and Health Care Without Harm, along with hospitals and other health care groups from across the country, ask President Obama to deliver a “Prescription for a Healthy Planet” at the talks.

The health sector is increasingly concerned about public health effects resulting from climate change, many of which are already occurring. Several major scientific studies predict that climate change will likely lead to significant increases in illness and death related to a number of factors including intense heat, floods and other extreme weather events; the deterioration of air quality; increased transmission of vector-borne and infectious diseases such as cholera, malaria, and dengue; and the compromising of agricultural production and food security causing malnutrition.

“The public health effects of climate change could be catastrophic, both here in the U.S. and around the world” stated Josh Karliner, international coordinator for Health Care Without Harm, which sponsored the advertisement. “We are urging President Obama and his administration to provide global leadership to protect public health at the climate talks in Copenhagen and beyond.”

The Prescription advocated by the groups outlines four “remedies” for reducing the health effects of climate change.

- 1. Protect Public Health:** Health concerns must be central to the climate treaty.
- 2. Reduce Emissions:** The Copenhagen accord must set strong targets to reduce greenhouse gas emissions well below 1990 levels.
- 3. Promote Clean Energy:** The treaty needs to foster energy efficiency as well as clean, renewable energy which improves public health by reducing both local and global pollution.

4. Finance Global Action: World leaders should mandate international funding so that developing countries can address the climate crisis.

“It is simply not possible to maintain healthy populations on a sick planet,” said Gary Cohen, president of Health Care Without Harm. “The world is already unable to take care of all its sick and injured people. Millions are already dying every day from similar health threats and we do not have the resources to take care of them. Climate change could increase this burden well beyond our capacity to cope with it.”

Cohen and others note that the health care sector also needs to take steps to reduce its own climate footprint. A recent report in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* conservatively estimated that health care itself contributes approximately eight percent of U.S. greenhouse gasses responsible for climate change. Hospitals and health facilities across the United States and around the world are engaged in various activities to reduce their own climate footprint. “Even if a final agreement is not reached in Copenhagen,” Cohen said, “the health care sector is taking action to protect the health of patients, health care staff and the community, as well as to save our planet.”

The *Times* advertisement is part of a global *Prescription for a Healthy Planet* initiative endorsed by dozens of health professionals organizations from around the world to protect public health from climate change.

About Health Care Without Harm: HCWH is an international coalition of more than 430 organizations in 52 countries, working to transform the health care industry worldwide, without compromising patient safety or care, so that it is ecologically sustainable and no longer a source of harm to public health and the environment. For more information on Health Care Without Harm, visit www.noharm.org.

About the HCWH Climate Campaign: HCWH’s climate campaign mobilizes the health care sector to advocate for strong climate mitigation and adaptation policies at the local, national and global levels. HCWH also works to assist the health care sector to reduce its climate footprint. The campaign provides education, resources and tools to help the health care sector improve energy efficiency and transition away from fossil fuels toward clean, renewable energy technologies. Health Care Without Harm also promotes local sustainable food systems, and advocates for sustainable water consumption, better waste management, and climate-friendly procurement. For more information on HCWH’s climate change program, visit www.noharm.org/all_regions/issues/energy/.