Health in a Changing Climate

Symposium Report

Scientific Committee
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Family & Community Medicine
UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
This virtual event was hosted at the University of Toronto Department of Family and Community Medicine (DFCM) on land that has been the traditional territory of many nations, including the Huron-Wendat, Anishinaabe, and the Mississaugas of the Credit.

This meeting place is still the home to many Indigenous people from across Turtle Island. We remain grateful to have the opportunity to work on this land.

Our program focused on climate change but we were also attentive to immense problems of air pollution, soil degradation, environmental displacement and access to clean water.

While we discussed action for a healthier future, we also acknowledged that, on the day of the symposium, 39 Indigenous communities in Canada still did not have safe drinking water. While many people call this place home, about 1 in 6 people experiencing homelessness in Toronto identify as Indigenous.

Over the course of the symposium, we reflected on these questions adapted from Dr. Dylan Robinson of Queen’s University:

1. Do we know the colonial history of the discipline we work in?

2. Do the ways in which our discipline perpetuates heteronormative / settler colonial / anti-BIPOC values impact our lives or the lives of our patients?

3. What ground are we occupying, and inviting others to occupy?

DFCM TEAM

This event would not have been possible without the dedicated efforts of DFCM staff and faculty:

David Tannenbaum
DFCM Interim Chair

Katherine Rouleau
Vice-Chair, Global Health and Social Accountability

Viola Antao
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Jessie Chen
Program Assistant, Global Health and Social Accountability

Megan Parry
Program Coordinator, Global Health and Social Accountability

Brian Da Silva
eLearning Design Analyst

Amy Noise
Communications Strategist

Alicia Fung
Communications Assistant
KEYNOTE: Planetary Health and a Healthy Recovery from COVID-19

Dr. Courtney Howard
Past-President, Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment

Framework for planetary health

Action alleviates anxiety

Our job is to recommend co-benefits

PANEL 1: Making the Links

Dr. Deborah McGregor
Canada Research Chair, Indigenous Environmental Justice

Indigenous peoples were complete societies

Addressing justice in solutions

Connecting the dots, naming the problem

"Indigenous peoples were complete societies with their own knowledge systems and laws for thousands of years"
SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

PANEL 1: Making the Links

Maya Menezes
Program Director at climate justice organization, The Leap

- Environmental justice
- Care work as a climate solution
- Role of doctors in making change

Dr. Alice McGushin
Programme Manager, The Lancet Countdown

- Health effects of climate change
- Opportunity to set goals for climate action
- Building back from COVID-19

Dr. Claudel P-Desrosiers
Chair, Québec Association of Physicians for the Environment

- Advocating as trainees
- Highlights of the Lancet Countdown
- 2020 Lancet Countdown Policy Brief
SYMPOSIUM SPEAKERS

Dr. Terry Kemple
RCGP National Representative for Sustainability, Climate Change and Green Issues

UK progress on sustainable healthcare
RCGP Green Impact toolkit
What can general practitioners do?

Dr. Aimée Bouka
Vice-Chair, Section of Residents, College of Family Physicians of Canada

Guide to improving family medicine training
Inequalities and healthcare
Equitable world as motivation

Dr. Fiona A. Miller
Founding Director, Centre for Sustainable Health Systems, UoF T

Sustainable health systems
Where healthcare can make an impact
Integrating care with communities

PANEL 2: Knowledge to Action
At the end of our symposium, we asked our participants to discuss 9 major topics for improving the health of our communities in a changing climate. We had 17 facilitators guide the discussions with expertise in family medicine, education, ecological health, patient and family engagement, global health, quality improvement, social accountability, emergency medicine and advocacy.

Thank you to all of our facilitators from a variety of professions and disciplines:

- KitShan Lee | Facilitator Lead
- Yasmeen Razvi
- Peter Sakuls
- Anna Cooper Reed
- Victoria Haldane
- Mia Kibel
- Matthew Teper
- Shinthujah Arulanantham
- Kara Hounsell
- Eleanor Colledge
- Brent Elsey
- Kabisha Velauthapillai
- Sarah Levitt
- Leah Bennett
- Daniel Rosenbaum
- MaryEllen Ruddell
- Shelby Olesovsky
“For all of these initiatives, it’s so important to have an interprofessional perspective.”

Kara Hounsell, conference facilitator

15 breakout groups discussed 9 key topics of interest and ideas for change

**Clinical**

- **Key Themes:** Education on green practices - optimize care in the community to avoid unnecessary healthcare use
- **Change Ideas:** Sustainability in measures of health system outcomes - collaboration among patients and providers - virtual care when appropriate

**Advocacy**

- **Key Themes:** Reducing carbon footprint, e.g. switching to greener inhalers, cutting food waste - virtual care when appropriate - addressing mental health
- **Change Ideas:** Share and spread knowledge (micro) - divest from fossil fuels (meso) - use examples from other places to support policy changes here (macro)

**Diet**

- **Key Themes:** Improving food culture - overconsumption - influence of industry on dietary patterns and guidelines
- **Change Ideas:** Education during periodic health exam - promotion of plant-based diets - recognize different diet choices
**Education**

**Key Themes:** Rapid adoption of emerging evidence - balance of theory and practice-based solutions - breaking barriers between disciplines  
**Change Ideas:** Learning embedded and integrated across phases of education and careers - recognition of urgency - codesign between teachers and learners

**Mental Health**

**Key Themes:** Tools and strategies needed to engage people in discussions that address ecological anxiety about environmental damage and climate change  
**Change Ideas:** Channel anxiety into advocacy and action

**QI & Research**

**Key Themes:** Virtual care expansion - legislative mandate for change - green QI  
**Change Ideas:** Menu or database of options for conducting QI initiatives

**Social Accountability**

**Key Themes:** Links between climate justice and health inequities - identify individuals who will be at higher risk from climate change  
**Change Ideas:** Incorporating underrepresented perspectives - inclusive of people with lived experience - emphasis on co-benefits

**Green Office**

**Key Themes:** Improving food culture - overconsumption - influence of industry on dietary patterns and guidelines  
**Change Ideas:** Education for patients and providers - promotion of plant-based diets - recognize different diet choices

**Transport**

**Key Themes:** Different modes of travel based on geography and needs  
**Change Ideas:** Advocacy for cycling and active transport
GREEN IDEAS
Sustainable Primary Care Innovations

GREEN TEAM
Eileen Nicolle and Sumac Creek Health Centre

- Reorganized clinic plus staff education to vastly reduce biohazard waste
- Remove unnecessary exam table paper to reduce waste and improve cleaning

PROJECT GREEN HEALTHCARE
CFMS Health & Environment Team

- Student teams partnered with local mentors from interdisciplinary backgrounds
- First-of-its-kind national community of practice empowering Canadian medical students to lead green change within our healthcare systems

GREEN OFFICE INITIATIVE
Meghan Davis and the Hamilton FHT

- Green Office Initiative to decrease their water, energy, emissions, toxin use and waste
- 165+ family physicians and 300 healthcare professionals working in teams in over 90 locations

MINI-COURSE ON SUSTAINABILITY
Emma McDermott and Gillian Ritcey, Dalhousie

- Delivered the university’s first interprofessional mini-course focused on the creation of sustainable health systems in a climate crisis

INHALER SUSTAINABLE QI
Kimberly Wintemute

- Pull strategies: contests, promos, online marketing, telemarketing, word of mouth, referral programs, commercials, billboards, radio advertisements
NEXT STEPS for 2021

We were delighted to have so many DFCM staff, faculty, and learners join us for the symposium. Our team also learned a great deal about interests for future topics and new initiatives sprouting up from DFCM sites.

We will be working hard with the DFCM Climate Change & Health Community of Practice to make more educational and professional development resources available, including Quality Improvement ideas and Green Office toolkits.

PARTICIPANT FEEDBACK HIGHLIGHTS

86% I will use the information I learned in my practice

96% I would like to learn more about environmental determinants of health

Top 3 practice changes
1. Sustainable QI initiatives
2. Engaging patients in discussion
3. Rx inhalers with lower carbon footprints
Health in a Changing Climate

EARTH DAY 2021

What is one thing I can do today to fight climate change?

Did you know that there’s a huge difference in the climate impact of inhalers?

The hydrofluorocarbon (HFC) propellant in metered-dose inhalers (MDI) is a potent greenhouse gas: 100 doses from an MDI is equivalent to a 290 km journey by car.

Fortunately, we have more sustainable alternatives: the carbon footprint of dry powder inhalers (DPI) is 30 times smaller than MDIs.

Consider making the switch at your patient’s next Rx renewal.

You can cut greenhouse gases from inhalers by 97% simply by switching from metered-dose to dry powder inhalers.