



An Advocacy towards 'Green Podiatry' – Call for Change to save our Planet!

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Abstract

Healthcare aims to promote good health and yet contributes to climate change. Striving for a healthier planet translates to keeping people healthier. Health care professionals including podiatrists should strive hard to help promote environmental awareness. We have a responsibility to act now to achieve a more resilient and sustainable healthcare industry for our future generations. We need new solutions and new social structures to help solve this global crisis. Changes in clinical practice adopted by all health care professions could bring about a sustainable future!

Keywords: Green Podiatry; Health; Climate Emergency; Climate Change; Healthcare; Greenhouse Gases; Sustainability

Background

Climate change is a growing health threat around the world contributing to food insecurity, cardiorespiratory ailments, and many other health issues. Although the health care industry aims to promote good health one could argue against its green credentials and this industry is part of this growing problem. It accounts for over 4% of global CO2 emissions [1].

The effect of climate change will affect people's health in the next decades putting the lives and livelihoods of millions of people around the globe at risk [2] Reports also show that climate change has been responsible for the loss of 5.5 million disability adjusted life years (DALYs) in the year 2000. This relates to deaths caused by cardiovascular diseases, diarrhoea, malaria and accidental injuries amongst others [2]. Many health conditions could be prevented through a healthy environment and good behaviours. One of the recent reports indicates that in London, the combined number of admissions for air pollution-related asthma and COPD across the studied population exceeds 1,700. Among these admissions, more than one-third are for children with asthma. This highlights the fact that less pollution would translate into fewer asthma attacks and cardiovascular diseases [3].

The current awareness and action amongst the healthcare community regarding the negative impact that this sector is imposing on the natural environment and society, is very low both in Europe and around the globe [4]. Sustainable healthcare can be defined as - "a complex system of interacting approaches to the restoration, management and optimisation of human health that has an ecological base, that is environmentally, economically and socially viable indefinitely, that functions harmoniously both with the human body and the non-human environment, and which does not result in unfair or disproportionate impacts on any significant contributory element of the healthcare system" [5].

The World Health Organization [WHO] has been working on climate change and health for over 25 years - advocating, collecting evidence and providing comprehensive support to countries in dealing with health effects of climate change. Furthermore, every two years, the WHO organizes dedicated Global Conferences on Health and Climate Change. In this regard, global leaders, policy makers and medical professional associations are advocating for environmental sustainability [6]. Everyone is encouraging the incorporation of climate change into their strategic plan. With a bit of