First global conference on climate change and health

The World Health Organization (WHO) will host the first global conference on climate change and health from 27 to 29 August 2014 at its headquarters in Geneva. The three-day conference will bring together leading experts. The purpose is to develop a shared vision of how the health sector can best prepare for climate change, and to highlight the health benefits of climate actions. The outcomes will inform the UN Secretary-General’s Climate Summit in September 2014, as well as discussions on climate change and sustainable development taking place later this year.

World Water Day 2014: Water and energy

The UN System, Member States and other relevant stakeholders are bringing attention to the water–energy nexus. The 2014 World Water Day particularly addresses inequities for the ‘bottom billion’ who live in slums and impoverished rural areas, and who survive without access to safe drinking water, adequate sanitation, sufficient food or energy services. It also aims to facilitate the development of policies and cross-cutting frameworks that bridge ministries and sectors, leading the way to energy security and sustainable water use in a green economy. Particular attention will be paid to identifying best practices that can make a water- and energy-efficient ‘green industry’ a reality. Read the facts and figures, and download the campaign materials.

International consultation on workers’ health coverage

To coincide with International Day for Health and Safety at Work, a three-day meeting will focus on interventions, indicators and service delivery, as well as policy options, strategies and mechanisms to scale up coverage of workers. It aims to develop criteria and indicators for measuring the access of workers to interventions for the prevention and control of occupational and work-related diseases and injuries.

Workers represent half the world’s population and are the major contributors to economic and social development. Yet, only 15% of workers worldwide have access to specialized occupational health services for advising employers and for providing assessment of occupational health risks, health surveillance, training in safe working methods, and first aid. Universal health coverage cannot be achieved until all working people – particularly in informal settings, small enterprises, rural, agricultural and migrant workers – have access to essential health services to prevent occupational and work-related diseases. The consultation will take place on 28–30 April 2014, in Semnan, Islamic Republic of Iran.
Medical waste disposal of sharps

Current WHO best infection control practices for injections do not address the use of needle (‘hub’) cutters due to insufficient evidence on their occupational safety and efficacy. Recent research on the use of hub cutters demonstrated no significant increase in needlestick injuries among injection providers when hub cutters were used.

The lack of effective sharps disposal approaches is considered an obstacle to the replacement of reusable injection devices by single-use devices. The challenge of destroying the huge quantity of used needles generated during mass vaccination campaigns, for example, can be an environmental and public health threat. Hub cutters have been proposed to improve waste management because they separate the needle from the syringe’s hub, reducing both waste volume and risk to the community.

Setting the research agenda on the health effects of chemicals

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WHO Collaborating Centre launches online courses on water and sanitation

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Waste from health care activities

- Of the total amount of waste generated by health care activities, about 80% is general waste.
- The remaining 20% is considered hazardous material that may be infectious, toxic or radioactive.
- Every year an estimated 16 billion injections are administered worldwide, but not all of the needles and syringes are properly disposed of afterwards.
- Health care waste contains potentially harmful microorganisms that can infect hospital patients, health care workers and the general public.

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