WHO conference on health and climate change

Climate disruption can compromise health security through extreme weather events and infectious disease outbreaks. A greater focus on preventive public health measures could ease pressure on health services and provide a more supportive environment for achieving universal health coverage. The first global conference on health and climate change will take place at WHO headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland from 27 to 29 August, 2014. The objectives are to reinforce health and climate policies, to programme and enhance climate-resilient health systems, and support health-promoting climate change mitigation policies. The two main topics that will be discussed at the conference are strengthening health system resilience to climate risks and promoting health while mitigating climate change. To find out more about the schedule, objectives, and themes click here.

“Climate Change: How it affects my health and what I can do…”

WHO invites children globally to participate in an art contest, as part of the global conference on health and climate change (August 27–29, 2014). Children aged 6 to 13 years are invited to create art, all mediums welcome, using the following theme “Climate change: How it affects my health and what I can do to positively influence the future.” Works of art should be submitted to childrenenvhealth@who.int (with photographs in high resolution) by 25 July 2014. Please use the subject line: “Climate change art submission_name” (e.g. Climate change art submission_JohnSmith).

All entries should include: Artist’s full name, age, and country of residence. Six pieces of artwork will be selected from each age category by WHO staff and climate change experts. They will be displayed throughout the conference at WHO headquarters in Geneva and on the WHO website. For more information on the contest and to receive the entry form, please contact childrenenvhealth@who.int

Universal health coverage and occupational health/safety for informal workers

The lack of health coverage for informal sector workers is a concern in terms of health consequences and equity, as well as a challenge in terms of financing and delivery models. The work-related health needs of informal sector workers cannot be addressed by the traditional organization and capacities of health care and occupational health services. A global workshop entitled: “Approaches to universal health coverage and occupational health and safety for the informal workforce in developing countries” will take place on 29 and 30 July 2014 in Washington DC, United States. It is organized by the Institute of Medicine of the US National Academies of Sciences and WHO/Pan American Health Organization will contribute.

Click here to register and to receive information updates The WHO strategy for working with countries on scaling up health coverage of workers is outlined in the recent fact sheet: Protecting workers’ health. Working sessions will be webcast.
Fourth European IRPA Congress

As one of 16 official supporting organizations, WHO took part in the recent Fourth European International Radiation Protection Association (IRPA) Congress. WHO and partners supported a workshop on data collection and medical exposures, a seminar on radiation protection in paediatric imaging, and a workshop on radiation protection principles. This represents one of a series of collaborative activities between WHO and IRPA, in support of the new Radiation basic safety standards (BSS). Read more on 4th IRPA congress. The conference took place in Geneva on 23–27 June and gathered over 700 participants.

Week of Action: International Lead Poisoning Prevention Awareness

In October 2014, WHO will launch the second international lead poisoning prevention week of action, with the elimination of leaded paint as the theme. Lead poisoning is entirely preventable, yet lead exposure is estimated to account for 0.6% of the global burden of disease, with the highest burden in developing regions. Childhood lead exposure is estimated to contribute to about 600 000 new cases of intellectual disabilities every year. Paints containing high levels of lead are still widely available and used in many countries for decorative purposes, although good substitutes without lead are available. Where leaded paint is available, it is a significant source of exposure for children.

World Toilet Day

In a bid to make sanitation for all a global development priority, the United Nations General Assembly designated 19 November as World Toilet Day, urging changes in both behaviour and policy on related issues. The resolution recognizes the role that civil society and nongovernmental organizations play. It also calls on countries to approach sanitation in a much broader context, including hygiene promotion, the provision of basic sanitation services, and sewerage and wastewater treatment, and reuse in the context of integrated water management. WHO is taking a leadership role in the post-2015 development agenda and also strengthening its activities in wastewater and excreta management and reuse. Read more on the call to action, and the latest publication on Water safety in distribution systems.

Climate change:

- Air pollution is a major environmental risk to health. By reducing air pollution levels, countries can reduce the burden of disease from stroke, heart disease, lung cancer, and both chronic and acute respiratory diseases, including asthma.

- Diarrhoeal diseases, malnutrition, malaria and dengue are highly climate sensitive.

- Urban air pollution is estimated to cause about 1.2 million deaths every year.

- Asthma can be triggered by pollen and aero-allergen levels, which rise with extreme heat.

- Floods contaminate fresh water supplies, heightening the risk of waterborne diseases; they also create a breeding ground for disease–carrying insects such as mosquitoes.

- Studies have shown that climate change could expose an additional 2 billion people to dengue transmission by the 2080s.

Click here for more information.

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