



UNION EUROPÉENNE DES MÉDECINS SPÉCIALISTES EUROPEAN UNION OF MEDICAL SPECIALISTS

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UEMS Statement on Environment and Health

The UEMS Council gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus, October 19, 2012, considers promotion of environmental responsibility among healthcare workers, patients and whole society to be one of fundamental ethical obligations of medical specialists and all physicians.

1.

Evidence indicates that environmental problems, encompassing biological, chemical, physical, psychological, sociological, or site and location hazards have a substantial impact on human health. As disease can be also defined as “maladjustment of the human organism to the environment”, emerging environmental challenges, such as climate change, global warming and air pollution, may result in new, significant hazards to human health, and can cause very serious burden on healthcare and medical professionals in the near future. Appropriate environmental policies should therefore be urgently implemented through consistent socio-economic programs, in order to develop the fundamental values of the management of the natural environment.

2.

The holistic concept of health recognizes the strength of social, economic, political and environmental influences on health. Scientific evidence shows also that there are opportunities for significant net benefits in limiting environmental degradation, not only for human health, but also for the economy.

3.

Physicians should be aware of environmental health problems and should continuously and repeatedly report them to authorities as well as inform their patients of environmental threats to health. Long-lasting tradition of physicians’ involvement in public affairs,

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particularly public health, should motivate physicians to participate actively in protection of environment and to give a personal example of responsible environmental behaviour, using a methodological approach based on: a) sustainable development; b) health promotion; c) risk communication and participation in the risk management, even with the implementation of the precautionary principle; d) constant analysis of the risk-benefit ratio.

4.

We, the medical professionals' society as a whole should continue to support environmental policies as a key vector for reducing health damage and healthcare costs caused by environmental degradation. Such efforts could include more stringent legislation and implementation of appropriate environmental pollution control policies, cleaner and more efficient energy and transport policies that are environmentally sustainable . We should also support national, regional and local government bodies in the planning of strategic objectives and actions for the promotion and the protection of the environment and the health.

5.

Continuously and dynamically changing, expanding and technologically advanced healthcare delivery should be aware of its impact on environment.

Taking into account the above, UEMS calls upon medical specialists and all physicians to be actively involved in prevention of imminent environmental problems and to call attention of society and policymakers to preventive measures.

*Prepared on the basis of Discussion and Conclusions
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