

“Climate Crisis Is Health Crisis”



Health Care Without Harm (HCWH) has published ‘ Global Road Map for Health Care Decarbonization ’, a report aimed at identifying the directions for the health sector to develop in line with the Paris Agreement while simultaneously achieving global health goals.

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The report subtitled ‘A navigational tool for achieving zero emissions with climate resilience and health equity’, explores the interplay between the health sector activities and the climate crisis considering that healthcare’s share in net global climate emissions is over 4.4%, an equivalent to the fifth largest polluting country on the planet.

The authors stress the necessity for healthcare to become climate-smart on its way to carbon neutrality. This, in turn, is directly related to the increased resilience of the health ecosystem and the achievement of health equity across the globe. With the focus on preparedness and prevention, they note that the COVID-19 pandemic has substantially accelerated the demand for these changes.

The key findings of the report include:

- If no change is introduced (the ‘business as usual’ scenario), by 2050 absolute global emissions of health sector would have tripled in comparison to a 2014 baseline reaching six gigatons a year.
- Emissions from fossil fuel combustion in the broad health sector (hospital energy supply, travel, manufacturing, transport, etc.) comprises 84% of all of health care’s climate emissions.
- Emissions could be cut by 70% if countries follow their Paris Agreement commitments. Still, even under this scenario healthcare’s contribution to climate crisis would have exceeded three gigatons a year by 2050.

Nevertheless, the HCWH report argues that solutions exist and proposes a set of actions that would allow for a 44.8-gigaton reduction in CO₂ emissions between 2014 and 2050, analogous to leaving more than 2.7 billion barrels of oil in the ground each year for 36 years .

Three decarbonisation pathways are suggested, namely in health care delivery, facilities and operations ; in healthcare’s supply chain; and in the wider economy and society. To achieve these, the report outlines seven actions focusing on:

1. 100% clean, renewable electricity
2. Zero-emission buildings and infrastructure
3. Zero-emission, sustainable travel and transport
4. Healthy, sustainably grown food and climate-resilient agriculture
5. Low-carbon pharmaceuticals
6. Circular healthcare and sustainable healthcare waste management
7. Effectiveness of health systems

In addition to the above, the reports emphasises the need to further support the transition of healthcare towards climate neutrality by investing in green research and innovation, maximising telehealth, integrating green policies into emergency response and pandemic preparedness, etc.

The document also presents a set of high-level recommendations for governments, international organizations such as the UN, for the private

sector (including health systems, manufacturers, suppliers, insurers, etc.) and civil society.

You can read the full report [here](#).

Source and image credit: HCWH

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