



LETTERS

LEADING ON CLIMATE CHANGE

Healthcare professionals must “think globally, act locally” on climate change

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We agree with Ramanathan and Haines about the harmful effects of short lived climate pollutants and carbon dioxide on climate change.¹ We also agree that if unchecked, climate change poses a grave threat to global public health.

Although we concur that healthcare professionals should be active participants in the climate change debate and sometimes lobbyists, we would inject a note of caution. We should be realistic about how much influence healthcare professionals have. Strategic policies affecting climate change are driven primarily by economics and politics, not health. And lobbyists acting on behalf of polluting industries probably hold the greatest sway with key decision makers. Few, if any, healthcare professionals can match the scale, sophistication, and determination of professional lobbyists.²

The environmental movement gave us the slogan, “Think globally, act locally.” This catchphrase is relevant to healthcare professionals, who should combat climate change locally, with a view to global benefits.

A recent NHS report on sustainable healthcare highlights how the NHS can reduce its carbon footprint by reducing greenhouse gas production.³

Our preferred strategy for minimising climate change attributable to healthcare is by improving public health. Through improved interventions, our population can become healthier for longer, which implies less ill health and a reduction in lower healthcare related climate change effects. This could be a rare win-win scenario.

Competing interests: GYS is the PHL London Sustainability Champion.

Full response at: <http://www.bmj.com/content/355/bmj.i5245/rr-5>.

- 1 Ramanathan V, Haines A. Healthcare professionals must lead on climate change. *BMJ* 2016;355:i5245. doi:10.1136/bmj.i5245 pmid:27702748.
- 2 Millward D. The American lobbying industry is completely out of control. *Telegraph* 2016, August 15 <http://www.telegraph.co.uk/news/2016/08/15/shine-light-on-lobbyists-far-reaching-influence-over-us-politics/>.
- 3 Carillion, All of Us, Barts Health NHS Trust. Sustainability day impact report NHS. 2016. <http://www.sduhealth.org.uk/news/493/nhs-sustainability-day-impact-report-2016-shows-over-5-million-savings-for-nhs/>.

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