

SUBJECT: Increasing Environmental Health Education

SUBMITTED BY: Student Association of the ACOFP on behalf of
Nadav Ribak, OMS-II, Campbell University School of Osteopathic Medicine
Amber Shirley, OMS-II, Lincoln Memorial University DeBusk College of
Osteopathic Medicine

REFERRED TO: 2023 American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP)
Congress of Delegates

RESOLUTION NO. 12

- 1 WHEREAS, climate change refers to “long-term shifts in temperatures and weather patterns” (1);
2 and
- 3 WHEREAS, “since the 1800s, human activities have been the main driver of climate change,
4 primarily due to burning fossil fuels like coal, oil and gas “(1); and
- 5 WHEREAS, “more than 12 million people around the world die every year because they live or
6 work in unhealthy environments” (2); and
- 7 WHEREAS, “Human health issues can increase mortality, impact food availability, and limit worker
8 productivity”(3); and
- 9 WHEREAS, physicians are entrusted to treat patients with lung, heart, and other organ diseases
10 along with cancer stemming from environmental concerns; and
- 11 WHEREAS, medical school curriculums do not currently have a structured set of standards on
12 environmental health, and “although some medical schools have begun to incorporate CCH
13 (climate change and health) into curricula, the inclusion usually lacks a comprehensive
14 framework for content and implementation” (4); and
- 15 WHEREAS, a medical school curriculum could focus on important elements of an environmental
16 health education unit for aspiring physicians as outlined by the research paper, Teaching
17 About Climate Change in Medical Education: An Opportunity. It proposes a three-pronged
18 approach: “First, doctors need to be able to manage climate-related illness, engage in local
19 health promotion and prevention, and provide healthcare in a responsible and sustainable
20 way. Secondly, teaching about climate change offers an avenue to improve public health
21 literacy and eco-health literacy, which are essential to building a climate-resilient society
22 and health-sector. Thirdly, climate change can be used to illustrate and deepen existing
23 learning, and strengthen graduate attributes.” (5); and
- 24 WHEREAS, it was found that “the six-week environmental health module combining didactic and
25 experiential elements significantly increased medical students’ self-reported sense of

26 preparedness to discuss environmental health issues, including climate change, with their
27 patients.” (6); now therefore be it

28 WHEREAS, the AAMC has released multiple spotlights of integration of climate and environmental
29 health around the U.S to increase its presence in medical school curriculum; and

30 WHEREAS, in a recent resolution passed by the ACOFP, it outlined developing education programs
31 and stated that it “shall offer education regarding the public health implications of climate
32 change. Education shall include relevant current events and at risk populations,
33 identification of health related complications and appropriate medical interventions” (7);
34 now, therefore be it

35 RESOLVED, that the American College of Osteopathic Family Physicians (ACOFP) encourages the
36 promotion of environmental health education.

37 FINAL ACTION: APPROVED as of March 29, 2023

References:

1. United Nations Climate Action
<https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/what-is-climate-change>
2. Prüss-Üstün, Annette, Wolf, J., Corvalán, Carlos F., Bos, R. & Neira, Maria Purificación. (2016). Preventing disease through healthy environments: a global assessment of the burden of disease from environmental risks. World Health Organization.
3. NOAA Climate Change Impacts www.noaa.gov/education/resource-collections/climate/climate-change-impacts
4. Sullivan, James K., et. al. Climate Change and Medical Education: An Integrative Model. Academic Medicine: February 2022 - Volume 97 - Issue 2 - p 188-192
5. Maxwell, Janie, and Grant Blashki. “Teaching About Climate Change in Medical Education: An Opportunity.” *Journal of public health research* vol. 5,1 673. 26 Apr. 2016
6. Kligler, B., Pinto Zipp, G., Rocchetti, C., Secic, M., & Ihde, E. S. (2021). The impact of integrating environmental health into medical school curricula: a survey-based study. *BMC medical education*, 21(1), 40.
7. ACOFP RES 3 C-3/22 ACOFP has previously sponsored a resolution on climate change already supports education, increase in curriculum