



For Immediate Release:

November 20, 2009

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**Health Community Speaks Out About Climate Change:
Implications for U.S. States and the Nation**

Top healthcare provider professionals present unified voice to inform national and international policy before Copenhagen Conference

WASHINGTON, D.C. – As the Copenhagen Climate Change Conference approaches next month, the health community has come together to speak out about the health impacts of climate change and urge policy makers to take action.

“Professionals from across the health community see first hand the consequences of climate change for their patients and for public health; without action on climate change these impacts will intensify,” said Paul Epstein, M.D., associate director of the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School. “It is our hope that policymakers see the importance of this issue and make informed decisions that will help protect the public’s health by avoiding the most severe impacts of climate change.”

At a Capitol Hill briefing on Friday, the Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School and the nation’s top medical and nursing professional organizations including the American Medical Association (AMA), the American Nurses Association (ANA), the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP) and the American Public Health Association (APHA), will discuss the impacts of climate change on the health of U.S. residents and will release fact sheets detailing these consequences, both on a national level and in specific states.

“The scientific evidence is clear that global climate change can carry serious health implications,” said American Medical Association President-Elect Cecil B. Wilson, M.D. “Extreme weather and temperature changes can lead to a number of negative health effects, like heat-related illnesses, respiratory problems and increases in infectious and vector-borne diseases. By educating physicians and other medical professionals on the negative health effects that global climate change can bring, we can be better prepared to provide patients with the best possible care.”

“Science has firmly established that climate change is a public health issue, and certain vulnerable populations bear the greatest burden of harm,” said Kim Knowlton, Dr.PH, Chair of the Climate Change & Health Committee of the Environment Section, American Public Health Association. “But investment in the public health system can help save lives, and ‘win-win’ solutions improve air

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quality and benefit health now, and at the same time reduce global warming pollution in the longer term."

The fact sheets note that warmer temperatures with climate change will create longer and more intense heat waves, which disproportionately affect children, the elderly and those with chronic medical conditions. According to the Harvard Center, climate change has also increased the allergy and asthma season by almost a month, and will lead to more widespread forest fires, worsening respiratory and heart disease.

"The challenges we face as a result of global climate change are unprecedented in human history," said Nancy L. Hughes, M.S., R.N., Director of the American Nurses Association's Center for Occupational and Environmental Health. "And the health provider community sees its impact every day through adverse health effects: heat related illnesses; accidents and injuries from extreme weather events; threatened quantity and quality of water supplies; and a rise in environmentally linked illnesses such as West Nile and dengue fever."

"Children are not little adults. They respond differently to environmental health threats, including climate change, than adults do," said Jerome A. Paulson, M.D., F.A.A.P. with the American Academy of Pediatrics Council on Environmental Health. "If adaptation strategies ignore the special needs of children, the adverse effects of climate change will be exacerbated."

To download the national and state-specific fact sheets, visit <http://chge.med.harvard.edu/programs/policy/index.html>.

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The Center for Health and the Global Environment at Harvard Medical School was founded in 1996 to expand environmental education at medical schools, and to further investigate and promote awareness of the human health consequences of global environmental change. The mission of the Center is to help people understand that our health, and that of our children, depends on the health of the environment, and that we must do everything we can to protect it. For more information, visit <http://chge.med.harvard.edu>