

Climate change affects human health, ATS membership survey shows

March 3 2015

The American Thoracic Society has published the results of a survey of the ATS membership on climate change which found that the majority of ATS members believe that climate change is real and that it is having a negative impact on the health of the patients that they care for.

"Our physician members are seeing the effects that climate change is having on the well-being of their [patients](#)," said John R. Balmes, MD, Chair of the ATS Environmental Health Policy Committee, who was one of the [survey](#)'s authors. "These results talk to the importance of groups involved in healthcare taking a stand on this issue, and educating their members and the patients that they serve that climate change is a healthcare issue."

Key results of the survey include:

- 89% of respondents believe climate change is happening
- 68% believe climate change is being driven entirely or mostly by human activity
- 65% believe climate change is relevant to direct patient care (either a great deal or a moderate amount)
- Free text responses indicate physician believe they are seeing climate change [health](#) effects in patients today

The survey, which was conducted by the Center for Climate Change Communication at George Mason University, polled 5,500 US ATS members and asked a series of questions about climate change and its

impact on patients. The survey had a response rate of 17% and received responses from 49 states and the District of Columbia.

Reported adverse health effects attributed to [climate change](#) included worsening of asthma due to exposure to ozone or other pollutants, longer and more severe allergy seasons, and an increased number of cases of acute and chronic lung conditions.

In addition to Dr. Balmes, other ATS authors of the survey included Gary Ewart, Senior Director of ATS Government Relations and George D. Thurston, DSc, and Tee L. Guidotti, MD, MPH, who are Vice Chair and member, respectively, of the ATS Environmental Health Policy Committee.

The survey results are published in the February issue of the *Annals of the American Thoracic Society*.

Provided by American Thoracic Society

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