

# UK health professionals unite for stronger measures to tackle climate change

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As world leaders prepare to meet in Paris for the 2015 United Nations Climate Change Conference, UK health professionals have formed an alliance of doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals to advocate for stronger measures to tackle climate change.

The Health Professional Alliance to Combat Climate Change (HPACCC) founder members include British Medical Association; Climate and Health Council; Faculty of Public Health; eight Royal Colleges (including Royal College of Physicians, Royal College of General Practitioners and Royal College of Nursing); and medical journals *The BMJ* and *The Lancet*.

The alliance has identified four areas for immediate action: improving air quality; increasing active transport; ensuring healthier and more sustainable nutrition; and working to reduce the environmental footprint of healthcare in the UK.

The hope is that other UK based representative health bodies will join and that similar alliances will emerge in other countries, so amplifying the powerful advocacy of [health professionals](#) around the world.

Since the UN formed the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) in 1988, charged with documenting the effects of climate change and formulating realistic strategies for action, "neither humanity nor the planet have fared well," argue Robin Stott co-chair of the Climate and Health Council, and colleagues.

They warn that more frequent and more severe natural disasters, instability in food and water supply, the spread of infectious disease, and forced migration "are already affecting human health and provide a glimpse of the near future."

They argue that "the evidence of adverse effects is incontrovertible, as is the need for urgent action" and say "political action has failed to respond to the challenge that the science presents."

Yet there are reasonable grounds for optimism. For example, substantial commitments to reduce carbon emissions from the US and China, Europe, and a host of high income countries form the basis of negotiations, while ten global cities representing 58 million people have drawn up ambitious plans to tackle climate change.

Religious leaders, notably the Pope and the Dalai Lama, have called for urgent action, and the divestment movement has pledged from 400 organisations to move \$2.6tr from fossil fuels to low carbon investment.

But they believe that the UK "is bucking these positive trends" and they call on the government to phase out unabated use of coal by 2023 to "improve [air quality](#), protect the health of our population, and reclaim the UK's leadership position in tackling climate change."

Meanwhile, and independently of governments, they point out that health professionals around the world are recognising that tackling climate change is practically and ethically essential to promoting [public health](#).

"The trust vested in health professionals gives us the opportunity and the responsibility to act," they write. "We hope that this new alliance and other allied groups will help to place [health](#) firmly at the centre of the [climate change](#) negotiations, helping to impel nations to act decisively so that humanity can flourish in a fairer and healthier world."

**More information:** Editorial: Combating climate change,  
[www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.h6178](http://www.bmj.com/cgi/doi/10.1136/bmj.h6178)

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