

The BMJ urges health professionals to act now on the climate emergency

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Doctors and other health professionals must use their unique and privileged position in society to take action on the climate crisis, say *The BMJ* editors and environmental health experts today.

In an editorial to mark the journal's special issue, they say time is running out to reverse, or even halt, the damage done by humanity to our planet, and they call on [health professionals](#) to act now, both individually and by holding organizations and governments to account.

"The evidence is clear: setting targets is no longer enough," they warn. "We need to recognize and communicate the harms to health of the climate emergency, create guidance on how to adapt to the change that cannot be prevented, and prevent further damage through mitigation strategies and by motivating [behavior change](#)."

They acknowledge that there remains debate about the relative importance of individual behavior and system change, but they say change is needed at both levels, and health professionals must embrace these responsibilities.

For example, as individuals they can make simple climate friendly behavioral choices regarding how they live and work, what they consume, what they eat, and how they travel. And as respected [community members](#), [health](#) professionals can introduce the climate emergency into conversations, share knowledge, and inform debate.

Health professionals can also take the lead on making healthcare more sustainable through reducing overdiagnosis and overtreatment in healthcare, eliminating waste, streamlining services, and better managing suppliers and procurement.

And they can push the NHS and other organizations, such as medical royal colleges, the BMA, and local government, to take responsibility for reaching their targets.

Clinicians will require support to achieve this goal, they say, but doing something tangible "can give us hope and purpose, provide relief from

the growing problem of climate anxiety, make us feel part of a collective whole, and help us square up to the challenge that we face."

"The [climate](#) emergency is a multidisciplinary, multisectoral, crisis that transcends professional and organizational barriers," they write. "Health professionals can help bring sharp focus to the urgent reforms required from individuals, organizations, and governments."

More information: Accelerating climate action: the role of health professionals, *The BMJ*, [DOI: 10.1136/bmj.n2425](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmj.n2425) , www.bmj.com/content/375/bmj.n2425

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