

## 5.M. Workshop: Mental Health and Climate change - Challenges and Opportunities

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Climate Change affects population health directly and indirectly, not only physical, but mental health also. Mental health and environment are closely linked to each other. Yet, so far the connections and relations have often been overlooked.

Health and climate change are closely linked to macro-economics, energy policy, urbanization, demographic factor, and mental status of population also.

The Lancet Commission specified that the future trends of climate change represent an unacceptably high and potentially

catastrophic risk to human health. Direct effects of climate change, are different: heat stress, floods, drought, storms etc. Indirect effects include overwhelming the population with increased disease vectors, air pollution, undernutrition, food insecurity, but also climate displacement, migration and mental disorders. Mental health and the impact of climate change on mental health becomes the focus of interest of the health professionals and scientists.

The aim of the workshop is to bring together these two areas of research and enable innovation. Mental Health and Climate Change should be concerned through Challenges and Opportunities.

Sustainable future for human population could be achievable with strengthening adaptation, but also mitigation activities. Changing mind-set of our and future generation, not only through adaptation but intensively through mitigation of climate change is very important. It is difficult, but necessary. The question for all of us is: can we lead through examples and actions? Changing mind-set related to climate change is a mental health and societal issue. Long term result of such actions should be less burden of mental disorders. It is important to note that climate change solutions will improve the quality of our air and food but also enhance children's cognitive abilities and strengthen mental health.

The important question for public health professionals is can we produce resilient communities in future, new generation more responsible for climate change mitigation and with strength enough mental health capacity?

#### Key messages:

- Changing mind-set related to climate change is a mental health and societal issue. Long term result of such actions should be less burden of mental disorders.
- Can we produce resilient communities in future, new generation more responsible for climate change mitigation and with strength enough mental health capacity?

### Environmental Disasters and Stress Related Disorders – Challenges to Build Resilience

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#### Background

Experiences related to the environmental disaster have had a great impact on psychological states, including stress related disorders and substance abuse disorders among the affected persons. To determine the causal relationship between environmental disaster-related experiences and levels of psychological states a review is needed.

#### Methods

Studies on stress related disorders and substance abuse disorders of the individuals affected by environmental disaster were assessed. The present study is a scoping review including all studies on environmental disasters and stress related disorders and substance abuse. The relationship between disaster-related experiences and psychological states was analyzed.

#### Results

Environmental disaster-related experiences are associated with stress related disorders and substance abuse disorders. However, the impact on stress related disorders varies and is associated with a) type of disaster and b) post-disaster living conditions.

#### Conclusions

The effects of environmental disaster-related experiences on psychological states among the affected persons is heterogeneous and often neglected. In most populations the effects reduced over time, but remained significantly many years after the event. Results suggest the urgent need to build resilience in population affected by environmental disasters.

### Perspective on Children's public mental health and climate change

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The impacts of climate change are not distributed equally. Some people will experience natural disasters first-hand, some

will be affected more gradually over time, and some will experience only indirect impacts. This presentation focuses on some of the populations that are more vulnerable to the mental health impacts of climate change, such as people who live in risk-prone areas and children. Factors that may increase sensitivity to the mental health impacts include geographic location, pre-existing disabilities or chronic illnesses, inequalities. Stress from climate impacts can cause children to experience changes in behaviour, memory, executive function, decision-making, and developmental disorders.

Climate-driven physical stress on mothers can cause adverse birth outcomes. Children, including foetuses, are at particular risk from air pollution, heat, malnutrition, infectious diseases, allergies, and mental illnesses. Disasters cause a set of stressors that can strain interpersonal interactions. This influences children's mental health. Children are also at increased risk from disturbances to their participation in the educational system.

Climate change solutions will improve the quality of our air and food but also enhance children's cognitive abilities and strengthen mental health. Authorities are creating preparation or adaptation plans to withstand new weather extremes. The psycho-social impacts of a changing climate are generally under lighted in these plans. How can communities prepare themselves to minimize suffering and promote resilience of children in the face of the challenging impacts of climate change?

### Mental Health & the role of mindset in Climate Change issues

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Climate change affects population health directly and indirectly, not only physical, but mental health also.

Natural disasters, exacerbated by climate change, like floods, storms, wildfires, and heat-waves, influence directly and rapidly human health and wellbeing, and have huge consequences on mental health. The big challenge of a fast-changing environment, and fact that new generations of children are growing in different environments, full of risks due to climate changes and different disasters, is a potential trigger for mental problems.

Climate impacts on water resources, food production, supply and safety also have an indirect impact on mental health. Depression, anxiety, suicid and other mental disorders have increased as a consequence of environmental changes, particularly of climate change.

Mental health impacts can be short and long term, acute and chronic. All of them incite problems of inequity and vulnerability. Eco-migrations, environmental refugees, group identity challenges increase the risk of aggression, different disorders, community challenges, as a consequence of inequity, vulnerability and increasing poverty.

Sustainable future for human population could be achievable with strengthening adaptation activities. Changing mindset of our and future generation, not only through adaptation but intensively through mitigation of climate change is very important. It is difficult, but necessary. It means strengthening personal responsibility and changing behaviour. It also means acceptance of sacrifices some habits for a better life of future generations. The question for all of us is: can we lead through examples and actions? Can we produce resilient communities in future, new generation more responsible for climate change mitigation and with better mental health capacity? Changing mindset related to climate change is a mental health and societal issue. Long term result of such actions should be less burden of mental disorders.