

ERA-EDTA is the first medical association that invests in 'greener' healthcare!



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The ERA-EDTA is the leading society in Europe for physicians working in the field of care for patients with kidney disease. The organization traditionally focuses on a broad range of activities aimed at improving the quality of patient care. Ecological issues have not been on the agenda until now. The ERA-EDTA is the first medical association to try and implement 'greener' health care as suggested by the 'Lancet Countdown' group, a collaboration among 24 academic institutions and intergovernmental organizations, which tracks progress on health and climate change and provides an independent assessment of the

health effects of climate change and the actions that are developed to stop it [1].

"The relation between health care and the environment/climate change is bi-directional. Not only does a polluted environment cause various diseases, but also the converse: at the global level, the health care sector also has a clear negative impact on the environment", explains Professor Peter Blankestijn, who has just published an editorial on this issue in *Nephrology, Dialysis, Transplant* (NDT) [2]. 'This is in conflict with the guiding principle for all physicians of *primum non nocere*, meaning 'first, do no harm'. According to Blankestijn: "The health profession not only has the ability but also the responsibility to act as public health advocates by communicating the threats and opportunities to the public and policy makers and ensuring climate change is understood as being central in human well-being. Therefore, every doctor needs to contribute to the development and implementation of 'greener' health care."

How does the ERA-EDTA contribute to a more environmentally friendly healthcare sector? First step is to create awareness with its members of the challenges that we are facing in patient care, research and education. Two examples from the field of nephrology are dialysis and self and home care. Hemodialysis is very energy-consuming, uses large quantities of water (usually at least 120 liters per patient per session, which is heated upto 37 °C and is thereafter discarded!), and creates substantial waste. Various dialysis industries have already launched initiatives in this respect. The ERA-EDTA is open to collaboration with industries to boost these initiatives. A second example is the implementation of e-health, promoting self and home care on a much larger scale in nephrology, reducing the need for patients to come to the hospital. The ERA-EDTA will function as a platform for end-users and industries to support these initiatives.

Another key word is 'sustainable healthcare education'. "We need to design new educa-

tional tools and programs using modern technologies to prepare our students and doctors for the health care of the future. This way, we hope to reduce the 'nephrologists carbon footprint', explains Monica Fontana, ERA-EDTA's executive manager. ■

References

01. Watts N et al. The Lancet Countdown on health and climate change: from 25 years of inaction to a global transformation for public health. *Lancet* 2018; 391: 581-630
02. Blankestijn, Peter et al. ERA-EDTA invests in transformation to greener health care. *Nephrol Dial Transplant* 2018; published online on 25 May