

June 6, 2021

## **Healthy environment, healthy kidneys!**

### **The ERA-EDTA takes the lead on climate change and health**

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**ABSTRACT:** Climate change represents one of the greatest global health threats of our time. In choosing Healthy Environment, Healthy Kidneys as the theme for the 2021 fully virtual Congress, the ERA-EDTA highlights the central role of nephrologists and other health professionals in advocacy for global efforts to reduce emissions and protect against climate change.

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Health has always been affected by climate and weather, but is increasingly clear that the change in climate is a significant threat to human health. The World Health Organization (WHO) estimates that 24% of global deaths are linked to environmental factors [1]. Climate change and pollution can lead to undernutrition, mental disorders, and noncommunicable diseases including chronic kidney disease and acute kidney injury [2].

The burden of addressing the death and disability associated with climate change falls to nephrologists and other healthcare professionals. At the same time, the healthcare sector makes a major contribution to the climate crisis, producing 4.4% of the global carbon footprint [3]. The treatment of kidney disease is particularly resource intensive; for example, current hemodialysis practice is energy demanding, uses large quantities of water and creates substantial waste.

ERA-EDTA President Professor Christopher Wanner commented: "The ERA-EDTA was one of the first international medical societies to urge investment in the transformation to a greener healthcare [4]. The theme of this year's fully virtual Congress, Healthy Environment, Healthy Kidneys, underlines the ERA-EDTA's commitment and the important role of nephrologists in addressing climate change."

The burden of climate change will fall heavily on younger people. During the ERA-EDTA Congress, a symposium\* will provide the opportunity to hear the views of younger healthcare professionals on climate change and health. There will also be a 45-minute discussion following the symposium between the speakers and medical students and nephrologists.

Dr Martin Herrmann, President of the German Alliance for Climate and Change and Health, will discuss the threat of climate change to the public health achievements of the last

century. At the same time, there is a major opportunity in addressing climate change, since climate protection measures are associated with great health benefits. Climate activists have shown how citizens, including health professionals, can take the lead in building momentum to achieve real change that transforms policy.

Professor Christian Witt (Germany) will highlight the morbidity and mortality induced by climate change in people with chronic diseases. More research is needed to identify the patients most vulnerable to global warming. Adaptive strategies are essential, especially in the heat islands of metropolitan areas, which will be 11C warmer than rural areas. Examples include the green, climate-adapted hospital of the future, and telemedicine and early-warning systems to prevent disease exacerbation caused by heat stress.

Dr Sylvia Hartmann, Vice Chair of the German Alliance for Climate Change and Health, will present the perspectives of the coming medical generation on the climate crisis. Healthcare professionals have a unique responsibility to take action. Beyond daily medical routines, healthcare professionals must demonstrate the health emergency represented by climate change. It is essential to act at once to protect the climate, and conserve and restore the environment. This calls for personal, professional and political action, and for the support of all of society.

“Throughout the world younger people are in the vanguard of action against global warming, and have shown us that addressing climate change is everyone’s responsibility. I look forward to hearing their views on climate change and health during the ERA-EDTA Congress,” concluded Professor Wanner.

\*S 0.7 Climate change and health: the opinion of the younger generation. June 7, 2021, 8:00-09:30.

[1] World Health Organization. Health and environment. <https://www.who.int/data/gho/data/themes/public-health-and-environment> (last accessed 15 May 2021)

[2] Borg M & Bi P. Nature Rev Nephrol 2021;17:294-5

[3] Healthcare without Harm. 2019. <https://noharm-global.org/documents/health-care-climate-footprint-report>

[4] Blankestijn PJ, et al. Nephrol Dial Transplant 2018;33(6):901-3

#### **About ERA-EDTA**

With more than 7,000 active members, the ERA-EDTA is one of the biggest nephrology associations worldwide leading European nephrology and one of the most important European Medical Associations. It organizes annual congresses and other educational and scientific activities. ERA-EDTA also collects data, and performs epidemiological studies through its Registry. The Society supports fellowships and educational/research projects through its committees and working groups. Its publications are NDT, CKJ (Open Access journal), and the online educational portal NEP.

The 59th Congress will take place in May 19-22, 2022, both virtual and live in Paris (France).

Website: [www.era-edta.org](http://www.era-edta.org)