

The Health Practitioner's Guide to Climate Change: Diagnosis and Cure

Edited by Jenny Griffiths, Mala Rao, Fiona Adshead and Allison Thorpe. Published by Earthscan London and Sterling VA 2009. Paperback. 380 pages with index. RRP \$44.95. ISBN 978-1-84407-729-8

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Climate change is already having a substantial impact on our planet, our health, our ability to produce food and sustainable ways for energy production, and life – now, and in the future. It is an important area for all health promotion practitioners. I was drawn to this book as it answers some key questions for me, both personally and professionally, for climate change action in policy, sustainable and healthy communities, and behaviour change. This book provides a useful overview of key issues and elements relevant to health and climate change. It is clearly written and deals with the complex issue of climate and health in very practical ways. The editors and authors offer a broad range of expertise in public health, health promotion, multidisciplinary public health workforce development, climate and health initiatives, and social marketing. Although many of the authors are based in the UK, they have made the book relevant to health practitioners around the world.

The book has two parts. Each part has an introduction that sets the scene for that section. All chapters list the key terms and offer a useful quote to highlight the theme of the chapter. The first four chapters (Part 1) concentrate on a variety of information about climate change, its impacts on health, how humanity is dependent on the natural environment, and the health benefits of sustainable development and a low carbon society. Chapter 1 discusses the 'hard facts' and includes myths, as well as key information about climate change. Chapter 2 examines climate change and its impacts as a serious threat to the health of populations. Chapter 3 explores the relationship between the natural environment and human

health. Chapter 4 covers the health benefits of action on climate change. This chapter is most pertinent to health practitioners as it highlights that although many see the relevance of actions to reduce greenhouse gas emissions; this is not yet appreciated by those responsible for climate change policy. We, as health practitioners, have an important role to play in advocacy and action for change.

Part 2 (chapters 5-12) offers actions or tools that we as health practitioners can use "wherever and whenever we live, work and play and that everyone in society has a part to play" (p.111). Fiona Adshead reminds us in her introduction to Part 2 that there are many ways that health practitioners can influence change at local, national and international levels through our daily practice and through joining others to advocate collectively. She offers five key messages: to "use sound science responsibility"; to "frame issues so that collective responses are facilitated"; to "lead by example"; to "look for common causes and risks across policy and practice areas and to work in partnership to exploit opportunities for dual delivery"; and finally, to "communicate effectively with ourselves and with potential partners – by ensuring our messages appeal to our target audience encouraging them to act". Each chapter is written by different authors and provides health practitioners with great ideas for action and tools to assist in this process. The final chapter deals with how to prepare for the health effects of climate change. It offers some solutions to adaptation, particularly to how health practitioners can promote the increased resilience of their local community to adapt to climate change. I particularly enjoyed Part 2 of the book. Like most health promotion practitioners, I wanted to see the ways that I can make the most difference and turn good ideas into action.

I would recommend this book to any health promotion or public health practitioner who is keen to make changes, both personally and professionally, to climate change and its impacts on health. The quote in the introduction – "If you think you are too small to make a difference, try sleeping in a closed room with a mosquito" (African proverb) – reminds us all that small things can contribute to big changes. Climate change is something we can all make a difference to. We are in a unique window of opportunity to do so – and we and our planet deserve it!