

Health Effects of Climate Change

JS Bajaj

Emeritus Professor and Chairman, Academic Committee,
National Academy of Medical Sciences, New Delhi-110029

Abstract

Climate change and environmental degradation are closely interlinked and pose a formidable, although not insurmountable, challenge. The evidence of climate change and global warming is now incontrovertible, although amount, rate, and intensity of such change is still subject of debate. The potential health effects of climate change are immense. Climate change is no longer an environmental issue alone but is also a health issue of immense import and impact. It is now well recognized that a major, and perhaps the biggest, challenge affecting the success of policies aimed at mitigation is the life-style of those living a life of luxury and affluence in rich nations (and a miniscule minority in poor nations).

In the ultimate analysis, it will be the ability of health systems to respond efficiently and effectively to direct and indirect adverse health effects of climate change that will determine future health outcomes of the population. In addition to reorientation of health policy planning and reorganization of health systems, additional investments in appropriate technology and human resource development, are critical. At an individual level, a low-carbon living will not only enhance quality of life, but will also result in health and environmental benefits.

KeyWords: climate change, global warming, greenhouse gases, infection diseases, adaptation and mitigation, carbon footprint, public health system.