WHO guidance for climate-resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities

Executive Summary

The aim of the guidance is to enhance the capacity of health care facilities to protect and improve the health of their target communities in an unstable and changing climate; and to empower health care facilities to be environmentally sustainable, by optimizing the use of resources and minimizing the release of waste into the environment. Climate resilient and environmentally sustainable health care facilities contribute to high quality of care and accessibility of services, and by helping reduce facility costs also ensure better affordability. They are, therefore, an important component of universal health coverage.

This document aims to:

* Guide professionals working in health care settings to understand and effectively prepare for the additional health risks posed by climate change.
* Strengthen capacity to effectively conduct surveillance of climate-related diseases; and monitor, anticipate, manage and adapt to the health risks associated with climate change.
* Guide health care facility officials to work with health determining sectors (including water and sanitation, energy, transportation, food, urban planning, environment) to prepare for the additional health risks posed by climate change through a resilience approach, and promote environmentally sustainable practices in providing services.
* Provide tools to assist health care facility officials assess their resilience to climate change threats, and environmental sustainability based on appropriate use of resources (in particular water and energy and sustainable procurement), and release of hazardous materials (biological, chemical, radiological), into their surrounding environment.
* Promote actions to ensure that health care facilities are constantly and increasingly strengthened and continue to be efficient and responsive to improve health, and contribute to reducing inequities and vulnerability within their local settings.

The guide builds upon WHO’s Operational Framework for Building Climate Resilient Health Systems, by focusing on health care facilities and specifically on opportunities to enhance their climate resilience while also taking steps towards their environmental sustainability. It expands on the information related to the four fundamental requirements for providing safe and quality care in the context of climate change.

(i) Health workforce: adequate numbers of skilled human resources, with decent working conditions, empowered and informed to respond to these environmental challenges.

(ii) Water, sanitation, hygiene and health care waste management: sustainable and safe management of water, sanitation and health care waste services.

(iii) Energy: sustainable energy services.

(iv) Infrastructure, technologies and products: appropriate infrastructure, technologies, products and processes, including all the operations that allow for the efficient functioning of a health care facility.

This document acts as a guide and needs to be adapted to local realities and requirements. New advances in knowledge, experiences and lessons from several health care facilities as well as changed circumstances (as those brought about by public health emergencies, such as the coronavirus disease of 2019 (COVID-19) pandemic), imply that this guide must be used with flexibility, and more as a model on how to improve operations, than as a prescription with expected actions. Whether large or small, all health care facilities can improve their operations while addressing key environmental concerns. Also, although health care facilities may have an important influential role to play with regards to climate resilience and environmental sustainability, some improvements will have to be implemented at higher levels (i.e. national or regional).

For further information see:

<https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/climate-resilient-and-environmentally-sustainable-health-care-facilities>

<https://www.mdpi.com/1660-4601/17/23/8849>