

CELEBRATING WORLD FAMILY DOCTOR DAY 2024

May 19

“Healthy Planet, Healthy People”

worldfamilydoctorday.org



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Dr Chrystal’s vision is to educate and motivate the individual and population towards better health outcomes.

Her mission is to help make sense of the rich science articles that are important to health to the everyday person through her articles.

Sustainable healthcare systems provide universal access to appropriate healthcare that optimizes health and wellbeing for patients and communities, as well as for future generations, by delivery of care that is needed, wanted, clinically effective, affordable, equitable, responsible in its use of resources, and functioning within planetary boundaries.

“Healthy Planet, Healthy People” is the theme of this year’s World Family Doctor Day.

This theme highlights the intrinsic connection between the health of our planet and the well-being of individuals, emphasizing the critical role primary healthcare can play in promoting sustainable health practices.

The environmental changes contribute to a rise in communicable and non-communicable diseases, impact mental health, and exacerbate health disparities.





Climate change is the biggest health threat of the 21st century.

When we talk about climate change, we are talking about the changes in the climate over the last 150 years. Rising greenhouse gas emissions are causing temperatures to increase globally, leading to broad changes in our climate. Burning fossil fuels is the main source of greenhouse gas emissions. ¹

Implementing solutions to address climate change presents a huge opportunity to promote better health and protect people from climate-sensitive diseases. ²

¹ worldfamilydoctorday.org

² <https://www.who.int/publications/i/item/9789240090224>

Health effects of climate change

Climate change affects health both directly (through extreme weather, air pollution and more) and indirectly (by affecting the social and environmental determinants of health, like nutrition, healthcare access, etc). **Some examples:**

Almost the entire global population (99%) breathes unhealthy air pollution, which mainly comes from burning fossil fuels. Air pollution is linked to many diseases, including asthma, lung cancer, strokes and more¹

Heatwaves have been linked to a wide range of adverse health effects, including heart attacks, kidney disease, cardio-respiratory diseases, decreased mental wellbeing, and even death²

Climate change is associated with increased water scarcity and contamination, leading to violent competition for scarce resources, forced migration and conflict.

Changing weather patterns and extreme weather events can reduce crop yields, potentially leading to food insecurity and malnutrition³

The geographic range and breeding window for mosquito-borne disease is broadening due to changing weather patterns⁴

Climate change has been linked to adverse mental health impacts for various reasons, such as extreme heat, trauma from extreme weather events, loss of livelihoods and culture, and anxiety about the future⁵

Climate change is affecting our health today

Climate change is here, now, and already affecting people's health. The health risks due to climate change are not equitable between and within regions and communities and contribute to major social inequalities in health.

Everyone is susceptible to the harms of climate change, but some groups of people are more vulnerable than others¹.



Which of the following do you think are more susceptible than average?



- Elderly people
- Infants and children
- Indigenous Peoples
- People in low-lying and coastal areas
- Women, especially pregnant women
- Smallholder farmers, pastoralists, fishing communities
- People who are experiencing socioeconomic disadvantage or unsafe housing
- People with pre-existing health conditions
- People who work outdoors in hot climates

That's right! All these groups are more susceptible.

Climate action is an opportunity to improve health and wellbeing

Good news! The health benefits of implementing climate solutions are immense. Policies and interventions designed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions and mitigate climate change also have the potential to reduce health inequity, build community resilience, and protect and promote better health⁷.

For example, many climate solutions (clean energy and transport, protecting nature, urban greening) rapidly produce health benefits to the local community who has implemented them⁸:



Improved air quality



Increased physical activity



Improved mental health



Reduced urban heat effect

Reducing greenhouse gas emissions pays for itself. For every dollar spent, approximately \$2 are saved in health costs.⁸

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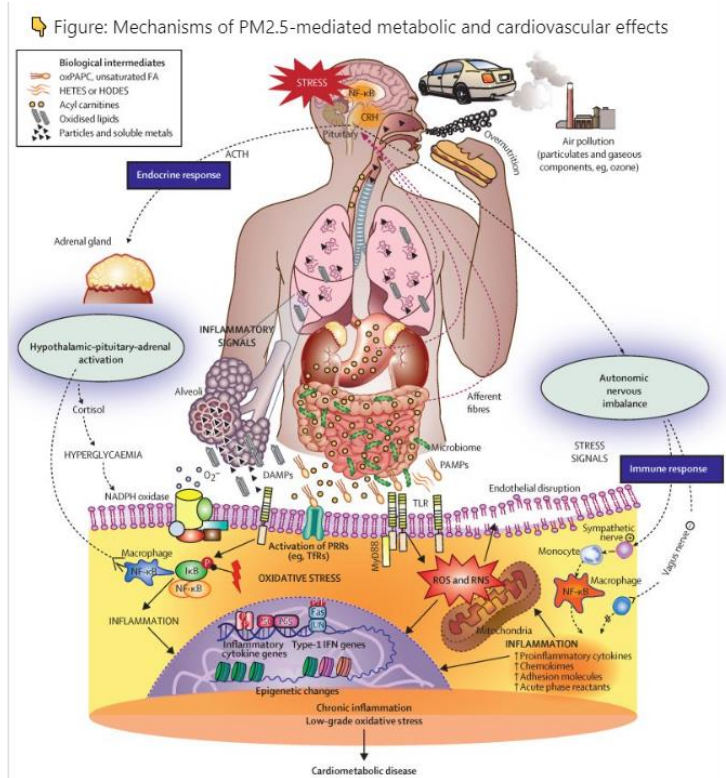
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Air pollution exposure and cardiometabolic risk

Prof Sanjay Rajagopalan, MD • Prof Robert D Brook, MD • Pedro R V O Salerno, MD •
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A recent Global Burden of Disease study estimated that a fifth of worldwide type 2 diabetes is attributable to chronic fine particulate matter (PM2.5) exposure.

"Air pollution is by far the most dominant environmental risk factor for health in general, and is responsible for over 9 million annual deaths globally", write authors of a new Review in *The Lancet Diabetes & Endocrinology*.

With 99% of the world's population residing in areas where air pollution levels are above current WHO air quality guidelines, there is a compelling need to better understand the connection between air pollution and cardiometabolic disease, and pathways to address this preventable risk factor. ³

³ [https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587\(23\)00361-3/abstract](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/landia/article/PIIS2213-8587(23)00361-3/abstract)

Final Thoughts:

The next time you have your health screening done, spare a moment to reflect on your lifestyle habits and discuss with your doctor on ways to improve the above towards a better and healthier you and our planet.

'Towards better health outcomes'

About the author:

Dr Chrystal Fong Chern Ying (MBBS Melbourne, FRACGP) is currently practicing as a family physician at Asia HealthPartners under the subsidiary of Singapore Institute of Advanced Medicine (SAM) Holdings, located at Lucky Plaza, Orchard, Singapore.

Dr Chrystal Fong is listed on the editors list of health screening providers on Health365, a healthcare, wellness and aesthetic medicine publishing agency in Asia. She has a special interest in health prevention and incorporates sports psychology and lifestyle medicine principles in her health screening and advocacy in health promotion.

She will be featured in the Britishpedia's upcoming 6- edition of 'Successful People in Malaysia and Singapore'.

She is an active sports person who has keen interests in lifestyle medicine, medical technology and longevity themed medical care. She takes personal pride in living the lifestyle medicine pillars herself and advocating through her sports communities and social media platforms.

Her personal mantra being 'The world is changed by your example, not your opinion.'

She incorporates her consultations with health coaching methods and inspires behavioural change with sports psychology angles.

She is on the executive committee board of the Society of Behavioural Health, Singapore and an Associate Member of the College of Family Physicians, Sg. She is also a certified personal trainer.