

New network on climate and health

The Norwegian network on climate and health has been established to promote urgently-needed climate change measures.

■ Global warming is described in *The Lancet* as the greatest threat to global health in the 21st century (1). The serious health consequences predicted include diseases resulting from water shortages, drought and a decline in food production, more extreme weather events, heat waves, floods, sea level rise and migration. Effective measures to prevent climate change are urgently needed to limit harmful impacts on life and health (2). The *Norwegian network on climate and health* has been established in order to contribute to this work (3).

The purpose of the network is to *inform* members about the health consequences that will result from climate change, and how these can best be prevented and managed. Moreover, we want to *engage and inspire* individuals to take greater environmental responsibility through the reduction of personal emissions of greenhouse gases, and to encourage individuals, organizations and institutions, in particular within the health sector, to reduce their emissions of CO₂. Measures to counter climate change have positive effects on the health of individuals as well as society as a whole. Members of the network are urged to lead the way by setting a good example

through reducing their own consumption, flying less frequently, walking and cycling, and using public transport in preference to private transport. Furthermore, greenhouse emissions can be reduced by using video/web conferencing for meetings and courses, by attending fewer conferences and avoiding long flights. Our members are encouraged to put climate change on the agenda both privately and at work.

Health consequences of climate change should be included in the regional and global climate debate to *influence* politicians and other important decision makers to implement climate measures sufficiently quickly to prevent serious health consequences. The network publishes the electronic journal *Bærekraftig helse* («Sustainable health»), which can be accessed on the network's website at www.klimaoghelse.com (3).

The consequences of climate change for life and health can be compared to the effects of the use of nuclear weapons. Medical practitioners have played a major role in the struggle against nuclear weapons and helped to achieve substantial disarmament. As health workers, we can also take the lead in preventing serious health impacts from climate change. By joining

the *Norwegian network on climate and health*, you can contribute to this work.

Lars T. Fadnes
klimaoghelse@fadnes.net

Gunnar Kvåle
Centre for International Health
University of Bergen

Unni Gopinathan
Norwegian Medical Students' Association

Britt Grethe Randem
Department of Occupational- and Environmental
Medicine
Oslo University Hospital

Guro Steine Letting
General practitioner in Fredrikstad

Reported conflicts of interest: None

References

1. Costello A, Abbas M, Allen A et al. Managing the health effects of climate change. *Lancet* 2009; 373: 1693–733.
2. The German Advisory Council on Global Change (WBGU): Climate change: Why 2°C? WBGU: Berlin, 2009. www.wbgu.de/wbgu_factsheet_2_en.html [7.12.2010].
3. Norsk nettverk for klima og helse. www.klimaoghelse.com [7.12.2010].

Mottatt 15.11. 2010, første revisjon innsendt 9.12. 2010, godkjent 6.1. 2011. Medisinsk redaktør Anne Kveim Lie.