

Wisconsin Nurses Association

2008 WNA Reference #3

Subject: Global Climate Change and Human Health
Introduced by: Wisconsin Environmental Health Nursing Coalition
WNA Core Issue(s): Workplace Health, Rights & Safety and
Patient Safety/Advocacy

Summary: Global climate change jeopardizes the health of populations and the integrity of the planet. Scientists warn that as global warming increases, the world will experience more air pollution and heat-related illnesses; accidents and injuries from increased extreme weather events; potentially decreased quantity and quality of water supplies; and an increase in vector-transmitted diseases. ANA has acknowledged the critical threat posed by these changes in its 2007 publication *Environmental Health Principles for Nursing Practice*. This report is intended to highlight the public health imperative created by global climate change, discuss the role of the nursing profession in addressing this threat, and propose prompt and decisive action to slow, stop, and even reverse the current crisis.

WNA has a recent history in promoting good Environmental Health policies and education of nurses using research and quality information. These activities include the following:

- Partnered with environmental agencies and groups such as Healthcare Without Harm, the Wisconsin Public Health Association, Wisconsin healthcare industry, and Clean Wisconsin.
- Developed the Wisconsin Environmental Health Coalition, which acknowledges WNA's commitment to the environment and addressing environmentally related health concerns and their impact on the nursing profession.
- Supported the work of ANA who has emerged as a leader in the formation of public policy that affects human health and patient advocacy and has adopted a Precautionary Approach which mandates action to counteract potential threats to human health and has passed a ANA Global Climate Change and Human Health Reference.
- Support the current scientific evidence from research conducted by health institutes, environmental groups, higher education institutes, and the US government clearly documents the threats posed by global climate change on a massive human and environmental scale.
- Wisconsin Nurses Association (WNA) exists to promote the health of the public and advance the nursing profession through the development and support of prevention programs" (ANA, 2001, p. 23). Nurses have the responsibility to be aware of broader health concerns such as environmental pollution.
- WNA has an obligation to take action to influence public policy on global climate health threats and to develop and support programs that would allow and encourage nurses to have an impact in the global health environment.

Recommendations: That the Wisconsin Nurses Association:

- 1. Recognize and publicly acknowledge that the challenges we face as a result of global climate change are unprecedented in human history and it is critical that nurses speak out in a united voice and advocate for change on both individual and policy levels.**
- 2. Encourage district member associations to support local public policies that endorse sustainable energy sources and reduce greenhouse gas emissions; and to support initiatives to decrease the contribution to global warming by the healthcare industry.**

WNA Goals:

Goal I. Collectively and collaboratively advocate for access to comprehensive quality health care services for all people.

This reference advocates for prevention of potential health affects of global climate change, especially for vulnerable populations.

Goal II. Assure that the registered nurse is an essential provider in all practice settings through education, research, workplace advocacy, legislation and regulation;

This reference promotes education, advocacy, and policy that serve to prevent/minimize the health affects of global climate change.

Goal III. Promote the existence of the Wisconsin Nurses Association as a multipurpose organization that will continue to be strong and effective at the local, state, and national levels.