

Preface

Note from the Editor-in-Chief: Global Warming

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Some unusual phenomena can only be explained by global warming. The unprecedented floods in Pakistan, China, Africa, Europe as well as the record high temperatures in Jordan lasting for record time are clear indications of what to come in the future. I am republishing my previous Note from the Editor in Chief as a second reminder for those concerned in health planning and administration to review their plan to accommodate for this phenomena.

Global warming is coming in full force, and the beginnings of it are already within us. It may not sound important to the medical community at first, but a closer look warrants that more attention should be paid to changes in disease patterns we expect to see. Since we can do very little to prevent or reverse the global warming, we need to be prepared to cope with its medical consequences. This is not the time to try to blame, criticize or fault some one for global warming, but rather it is the time to act.

As temperatures increase, desertification expands, unusual weather conditions prevail and the disease patterns in our country and the region will definitely change. Heatstroke, dehydration, diarrheal diseases, tick-borne diseases, skin cancers, skin sun burns, eye diseases and sand lung disease will dramatically increase. The reappearance of low incidence or long gone diseases such as malaria, cholera and meningitis epidemics will likely be on the increase. Scarce water, expected to be the order of the day, will lead to constant outbreaks of food related diseases and water pollution diseases. As the strata of poor people are likely to become larger, this will add more to the medical problems related to poverty and malnutrition.

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The health care system and the health education institutions need to take note of the global warming and be prepared to take care of its medical consequences. Medical school curricula need to emphasize the diseases that are expected to be on the increase. Medical and public education, in addition, should be boosted, especially for heatstroke, dehydration and skin cancers. The ordinary person may continue to live his own life in the same manner as he did previously, which will lead to considerable medical complications in the era of global warming. Hence, constant public education is needed to alert people to the necessity of modifying their life style to avoid these medical complications.

Vaccination and surveillance of currently uncommon diseases need to be activated to new limits.

Above all, the medical community needs to be alert, prepared and well trained to cope with consequences of global warming. This is the best way of adapting to our environment and the dramatic changes which are taking place in it.