

WONCA Statement on Planetary Health and Sustainable Development Goals



Human health is dependent on natural systems which underpin a range of essential services such as the provision of clean air and water, nutritious food, stable climates, and clean energy for development. Planetary Health is defined as the pursuit of the highest attainable standard of health, wellbeing, and equity worldwide through judicious attention to the human systems — political, economic, and social — that shape the future of humanity and the Earth’s natural systems, which define the safe environmental limits within which humanity can flourish. Put simply, “Planetary Health is the health of human civilization and the state of the natural systems on which it depends”¹. The Earth’s natural systems are the foundation of the Sustainable Development Goals²; henceforth, in order to achieve good health and wellbeing we must address Climate Change and other environmental dangers by attributing a high priority to efforts related to these issues.

As family doctors we are in a unique position to promote knowledge about Planetary Health and behaviour changes, which can improve both individual and Planetary Health - the so called *co-benefits* - such as active transportation, low emission sources of energy and a more vegetable based diet in our patient communities. It is also imperative that Planetary Health be included in the core curriculum of medical schools, family medicine residencies and further professional development. We must strive to integrate sustainability into our individual behaviour, clinical practice, and in our meetings.

Finally, we invite all family doctors to collaborate in the development of innovative strategies, practical examples, scientific evidence for effective action, inclusive educational resources and to advocate about Planetary Health.

Endorsed by Wonca Executive April 2017

¹Whitmee S, Haines A, Beyrer C, et al. Safeguarding human health in the Anthropocene epoch: report of The Rockefeller Foundation–Lancet Commission on planetary health. Lancet 2015; published online July 16. [http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736\(15\)60901-1](http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/S0140-6736(15)60901-1).

²<https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/content/documents/21252030%20Agenda%20for%20Sustainable%20Development%20web.pdf>, accessed on 3/25/17.