



Position Statement

Impact of climate change

Background

There is strong and well evidenced belief that climate change is unequivocally occurring and that weather patterns appear to be noticeably changing. The threats of climate change are a serious threat to life forms on the planet. These effects are predicted to increase in the years to come.

The environmental threats to human health resulting from climate change on a planetary scale are significant and many. It includes extreme weather events, natural disasters, population displacement, increased incidence in communicable diseases, and food and water shortages.

As key players, all healthcare workers are being advised to take on board the issues and urged to take action on climate change in a drive to minimize these threats to human health. Midwives can take an essential role in influencing social change in relation to sustainability.

Position

Many of the potential effects of climate change could have serious consequences for women, babies and families as well as for midwives themselves. It is therefore important for the midwifery profession to recognise the significance of the threat of climate change and to find ways of contributing to the management of local and global environmental issues relating to climate change.

Recommendations

ICM encourages member associations to:

- Be aware of the scientific consensus that global climate change is occurring and that human behaviours are making significant contributions.
- Incorporate the health implications of climate change for childbearing communities into midwifery education and professional development.
- Recognise the importance of midwifery input in climate change policymaking at national, regional and global levels and aim to achieve representation wherever possible.
- Encourage government agencies to strengthen public health infrastructure to ensure that the global health effects of climate change can be anticipated and responded to more efficiently within childbearing communities.
- Encourage midwives to serve as role models for promoting environmental sustainability and play an active role in educating women and their families on sustainable practices.
- Conduct research to further inform the climate change agenda in relation to both midwifery practice and the impact of climate change on the childbearing community

Other relevant documents

- Davies L, Daellenbach R, Kensington M (2011) Sustainability, Midwifery and Birth. London Routledge
- Costello A, Abbas M, Allen A, et al. Managing the health effects of climate change. Lancet 2009; **373**: 1693–733.
- Hope P et al. (2012) Creating Sustainable Health and Care Systems in Ageing Societies Report of the Ageing Societies Working Group 2012 Global Health Policy Summit
- Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) (2010) Understanding Climate Change: 22 years of IPCC assessment".
http://www.ipcc.ch/pdf/press/ipcc_leaflets_2010/ipcc-brochure_understanding.pdf
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- McMichael AJ. (2013) Globalization, Climate change and Human Health. N Engl J Med 2013;368:1335-43.

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