Global Warmth, Health Disparities, and Social Justice

History of heat waves and extreme weather events have caused and continue to cause far-reaching harm. Acceleration of global warming has already affected all sectors of our society in many ways. The ‘heat’ of the summer season related heat waves and extreme temperatures are particularly worrisome.

There is a growing recognition that there are conditions that make some people more vulnerable to the heat wave’s impact. Extreme heat is a public health threat, but it isn’t the only one. Poor physical or mental health, poverty, age, and living in urban environments are the inter-related factors that make some communities more vulnerable to extreme temperatures and heat waves.

In this climate we need equity, more than ever. Not just equal treatment but equal outcomes. Health disparities by race, income, and place of residence are a result of many things, like access to healthcare or living in areas with insufficient cooling systems. Exposure to heat stress can cause acute health effects like heat stroke, heat exhaustion, and dehydration among others. But it can also exacerbate chronic conditions like asthma, cardiovascular disease, and diabetes.

Cancer is a disease that is strongly influenced by environmental factors, leading to cancer disparities among different populations. African American and Hispanic cancer survivors are more likely to develop skin cancer, breast cancer, and colon cancer due to factors like pollution and diet.

By recognizing that global warming contributes to the emergence of pandemics, and that both of these challenges have strong ties to health disparities, solutions can be designed to maximize positive outcomes for all of them.

By recognizing that global warming contributes to the emergence of pandemics, and that both of these challenges have strong ties to health disparities.

Air pollution, for example, is particularly high in many communities of color, which may be located near factories or highways. This pollution can cause respiratory problems and heart disease. In addition, communities of color may have less access to healthcare and more exposure to pollution.

It’s not just the heat waves that are a concern. Severe smoke, heat and wildfires: our new norm?

Evolving Public Health Strategies for the 21st Century

As the planet warms, public health strategies need to evolve. This involves understanding the impacts of climate change on our health, developing new ways to prevent and treat related diseases, and adapting to the changing needs of our communities.

UCSF has launched a new program, the Climate Health and Pandemic Resilience Initiative, to address these challenges. The program’s new, NIEHS-funded center, the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, is working to improve health throughout the lifespan of individuals and populations.

The program’s new, NIEHS-funded center, the UCSF Program on Reproductive Health and the Environment, is working to improve health throughout the lifespan of individuals and populations.

UCSF and Stanford have embarked on a novel collaboration to present the first NorCal Symposium on Climate and Pandemic Resilience in Health Care. This symposium aims to bring together professionals from a variety of fields to discuss the complex interconnections between climate change, public health, and disaster preparedness.

On Tuesday, October 20th, the symposium will be held online from 1 PM to 5 PM. The event is free and open to all, but registration is required. To register, please visit the event website.

Join us for a day of learning and discussion as we explore how to create a more resilient future for everyone.

For more information, please visit the UCSF Climate Health Newsletter. Subscribe to our email list to receive updates and news about our climate health initiatives.