

Planetary Health and Nursing: A Call to Action for a Sustainable Future

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Dear Editor,

The concept of planetary health is gaining momentum as the world grapples with the impact of climate change and environmental degradation on human health. Planetary health refers to the interdependent relationship between human health and the natural environment, including the earth's ecosystems, natural resources, and climate (1). Climate change, pollution, and resource depletion profoundly impact human health, and the situation is only expected to worsen unless urgent action is taken (2). Nurses are uniquely positioned to address the planetary health crisis. As a profession dedicated to promoting health and well-being, nursing has a crucial role in addressing the planetary health crisis (3). In this article, we will explore the importance of planetary health and the role that nurses can play in promoting a sustainable future.

One of the most significant contributions that nursing can make to planetary health is to promote sustainable healthcare practices. Healthcare facilities are responsible for a substantial portion of greenhouse gas emissions, and by reducing their environmental impact, healthcare professionals can help to mitigate the effects of climate change on human health (4). According to previous research, the healthcare sector in the United Kingdom and Australia accounts for roughly 3% to 4% and 7% of national greenhouse gas emissions, respectively (5). Nurses can promote sustainable healthcare practices by reducing energy and water consumption and waste and

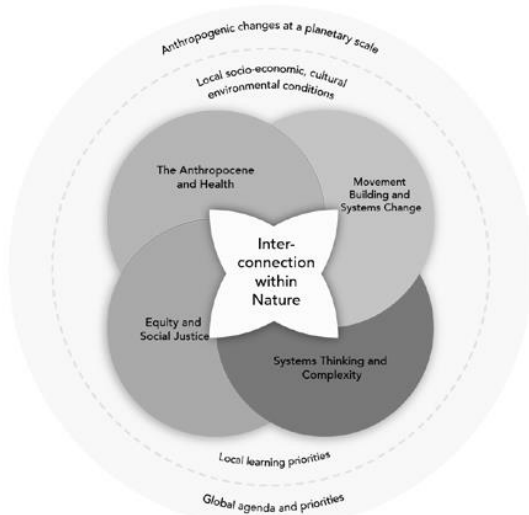
implementing environmentally friendly policies and procedures. With the ethical responsibility to do no harm, nurses possess significant potential to swiftly transition from being consumers of environmentally harmful industries to becoming advocates for the green revolution (6).

Nurses can also play a critical role in educating patients and the broader community about the relationship between human health and the natural environment. This includes raising awareness about the health impacts of climate change, pollution, and resource depletion and promoting behaviours that support planetary health. For example, The Nurses Climate Challenge (<https://nursesclimatechallenge.org/>) initiative is a global effort led by the Health Care Without Harm that seeks to encourage nurses to raise awareness among healthcare professionals about the effects of climate change on health. Given their high level of trust globally, nurses are well-suited to promote greater efforts to address climate change within the healthcare sector (7). Nurses can also advocate for policies and programs prioritising planetary health and encouraging community involvement in environmental conservation efforts.

In addition, nursing research can contribute to the development of evidence-based interventions that promote planetary health. This includes investigating the health impacts of environmental degradation and climate change, identifying strategies to reduce the environmental impact of healthcare, and developing interventions that promote sustainable healthcare practices and

behaviours. The Planetary Health Education Framework by Planetary Health Alliance (Figure 1), can be used to revamp nursing education by incorporating the principles of planetary health. The goal is to equip nurses globally with the knowledge and skills to engage in research, teaching, advocacy, and clinical practice that promote the health of the planet.

Figure 1: The Planetary Health Education Network



(<https://www.planetaryhealthalliance.org/education-framework>)

Finally, nurses can collaborate with other healthcare professionals and stakeholders to address planetary health challenges. The 2022 World Health Day theme emphasises the importance of recognising the interdependence between the health of our planet and the health of its inhabitants. To tackle the complex challenges facing our planet, engaging in collaborative efforts for a sustainable future for the next generations is imperative. The collaboration includes working with environmental scientists, policymakers, and non-profit organisations to develop and implement interventions promoting a healthy planet and communities. By working together, healthcare professionals can leverage their expertise and resources to address complex global health challenges (8).

In conclusion, nursing has a crucial role in promoting planetary health and creating a sustainable future. By fostering sustainable healthcare practices, educating patients and the

wider community, conducting research on the health impacts of environmental destruction, and collaborating with other healthcare professionals and stakeholders, nurses can help to mitigate the effects of climate change and environmental degradation on human health. It is time for nursing to embrace a call to action for planetary health and work towards a healthier, more sustainable future for all.

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