

AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION HOUSE OF DELEGATES

Resolution: 924
(I-16)

Introduced by: American Association of Public Health Physicians
Subject: AMA Advocacy for Environmental Sustainability and Climate
Referred to: Reference Committee K
(Paul A. Friedrichs, MD, Chair)

1 Whereas, AMA policy recognizes “the potential adverse public health effects of global climate
2 change” (AMA Policy H-135.938); and
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4 Whereas, Adopting environmental sustainability and other measures to halt global climate
5 change often saves money for physicians¹ and hospitals²; and
6
7 Whereas, AMA policies favor environmental education and stewardship (H-135.973, H-135.969,
8 H-135.939) and the need for improved energy efficiency in our offices and medical centers
9 (D-155.999), and other aspects of environmental sustainability but our AMA offers no programs
10 to help physicians to implement these policies; and
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12 Whereas, Our AMA does not have a policy that the AMA itself, representing America’s doctors,
13 will be an advocate for environmental sustainability and efforts to halt global climate change;
14 and
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16 Whereas, Our AMA has in the past taken advocacy positions on subjects which have broad
17 potential impacts on human health, such as nuclear weapons testing, vaccinations, tobacco
18 use, and chemical warfare; and
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20 Whereas, Our AMA includes 40 topics as part of its advocacy mission³, yet environmental
21 sustainability is not among them, despite the potential benefits to physician practices and the
22 health risks posed by climate change; and
23
24 Whereas, A few state or specialty medical societies offer environmental sustainability programs
25 to their members, which could be offered by the AMA at little cost; therefore be it
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27 RESOLVED, That our American Medical Association develop a strategy to advocate for
28 governments and other organizations to promote environmental sustainability and other efforts
29 to halt global climate change (Directive to Take Action); and be it further
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31 RESOLVED, That our AMA incorporate principles of environmental sustainability within its
32 institutional mission and business operations (Directive to Take Action); and be it further
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34 RESOLVED, That our AMA offer programs to physicians to assist them to adopt environmental
35 sustainability in their practices and to help physicians to share these concepts with their patients
36 and with their communities. (Directive to Take Action)

¹ “Florida Medical” 2007, pp 41-45

² Sustainable Healthcare (Wiley-Blackwell, 2013) p16

³ <http://www.ama-assn.org/ama/pub/advocacy/topics.page>

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Fiscal Note: Not yet determined

Received: 09/30/16

RELEVANT AMA POLICIES

Global Climate Change and Human Health H-135.938

Our AMA:

1. Supports the findings of the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change's fourth assessment report and concurs with the scientific consensus that the Earth is undergoing adverse global climate change and that anthropogenic contributions are significant. These climate changes will create conditions that affect public health, with disproportionate impacts on vulnerable populations, including children, the elderly, and the poor.
2. Supports educating the medical community on the potential adverse public health effects of global climate change and incorporating the health implications of climate change into the spectrum of medical education, including topics such as population displacement, heat waves and drought, flooding, infectious and vector-borne diseases, and potable water supplies.
3. (a) Recognizes the importance of physician involvement in policymaking at the state, national, and global level and supports efforts to search for novel, comprehensive, and economically sensitive approaches to mitigating climate change to protect the health of the public; and (b) recognizes that whatever the etiology of global climate change, policymakers should work to reduce human contributions to such changes.
4. Encourages physicians to assist in educating patients and the public on environmentally sustainable practices, and to serve as role models for promoting environmental sustainability.
5. Encourages physicians to work with local and state health departments to strengthen the public health infrastructure to ensure that the global health effects of climate change can be anticipated and responded to more efficiently, and that the AMA's Center for Public Health Preparedness and Disaster Response assist in this effort.
6. Supports epidemiological, translational, clinical and basic science research necessary for evidence-based global climate change policy decisions related to health care and treatment. CSAPH Rep. 3, I-08 Reaffirmation A-14

Stewardship of the Environment H-135.973

- The AMA: (1) encourages physicians to be spokespersons for environmental stewardship, including the discussion of these issues when appropriate with patients;
- (2) encourages the medical community to cooperate in reducing or recycling waste;
 - (3) encourages physicians and the rest of the medical community to dispose of its medical waste in a safe and properly prescribed manner;
 - (4) supports enhancing the role of physicians and other scientists in environmental education;
 - (5) endorses legislation such as the National Environmental Education Act to increase public understanding of environmental degradation and its prevention;
 - (6) encourages research efforts at ascertaining the physiological and psychological effects of abrupt as well as chronic environmental changes;
 - (7) encourages international exchange of information relating to environmental degradation and the adverse human health effects resulting from environmental degradation;
 - (8) encourages and helps support physicians who participate actively in international planning and development conventions associated with improving the environment;
 - (9) encourages educational programs for worldwide family planning and control of population growth;
 - (10) encourages research and development programs for safer, more effective, and less expensive means of preventing unwanted pregnancy;

- (11) encourages programs to prevent or reduce the human and environmental health impact from global climate change and environmental degradation.
 - (12) encourages economic development programs for all nations that will be sustainable and yet nondestructive to the environment;
 - (13) encourages physicians and environmental scientists in the United States to continue to incorporate concerns for human health into current environmental research and public policy initiatives;
 - (14) encourages physician educators in medical schools, residency programs, and continuing medical education sessions to devote more attention to environmental health issues;
 - (15) will strengthen its liaison with appropriate environmental health agencies, including the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences (NIEHS);
 - (16) encourages expanded funding for environmental research by the federal government; and
 - (17) encourages family planning through national and international support.
- CSA Rep. G, I-89 Amended: CLRPD Rep. D, I-92 Amended: CSA Rep. 8, A-03 Reaffirmed in lieu of Res. 417, A-04 Reaffirmed in lieu of Res. 402, A-10

Environmental Health Programs H-135.969

Our AMA (1) urges the physicians of the United States to respond to the challenge for a clean environment individually and through professional groups by becoming the spokespersons for environmental stewardship; and (2) encourages state and county medical societies to establish active environmental health committees.

Res. 124, A-90 Reaffirmed: Sunset Report, I-00 Reaffirmed: CSAPH Rep. 1, A-10

Green Initiatives and the Health Care Community H-135.939

Our AMA supports: (1) responsible waste management policies, including the promotion of appropriate recycling and waste reduction; (2) the use of ecologically sustainable products, foods, and materials when possible; (3) the development of products that are non-toxic, sustainable, and ecologically sound; (4) building practices that help reduce resource utilization and contribute to a healthy environment; and (5) community-wide adoption of 'green' initiatives and activities by organizations, businesses, homes, schools, and government and health care entities.

CSAPH Rep. 1, I-08 Reaffirmation A-09 Reaffirmed in lieu of Res. 402, A-10 Reaffirmed in lieu of: Res. 504, A-16

Energy Efficiency and Medical Practice D-155.999

Our AMA will urge its individual members and organizational affiliates to participate in energy efficiency activities in all medical facilities including hospitals, clinics, offices and research facilities.

Res. 413, I-98 Reaffirmed: CLRPD Rep. 1, A-08