



The Royal Australasian
College of Physicians

Media Release

RACP rallies global medical community on health impacts of climate change

12 October 2015

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) is today leading the charge to raise awareness of the health impacts of climate change with a 'Day of Global Action'.

Backed by 58 international health and medical organisations from around the globe with more expected to follow, the RACP's 'Day of Global Action' marks the start of the *Doctors for Climate Action* campaign calling on world leaders to commit to real action on climate change at the United Nations Climate Change Conference, COP21, in Paris in December.

Campaign partners span the globe and include organisations such as The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, The Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow, The Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh and The Royal College of Physicians of Ireland, West African College of Physicians, College of Physicians and Surgeons Pakistan, and Hong Kong College of Physicians to name just a few.

RACP President, Laureate Professor Nick Talley said international support for the initiative demonstrates the growing concern about the health impacts of climate change amongst the global medical community.

"The RACP, alongside our partner organisations, is committed to bringing the medical voice to the forefront of the debate about climate change. We can no longer ignore the very real impact of climate change on the health of each and every individual in Australia and New Zealand, and around the world.

"That's why, in addition to partnering with health and medical organisations, we have created [Doctors for Climate Action](#), a campaign for individual doctors, health professionals and anyone concerned about the health impacts of climate change to add their names to the call for action.

"Today we invite everyone to head to the website, get the facts, and join us in calling for world leaders to take urgent and meaningful action on climate change at COP21.

"In Australia we know that unchecked climate change will increase the frequency and severity of heatwaves, bushfires, droughts and floods. These increases have potentially devastating health impacts, with increases in heatwaves putting vulnerable people, including children, the elderly and those suffering with chronic illnesses at heightened risk of exhaustion, heatstroke and more serious health complications such as renal failure.

"But there are also opportunities to greatly improve our health as we tackle climate change. For example, creating more opportunities to walk and cycle rather than drive will not only help to improve our health and wellbeing but it also will help in reducing the impacts of climate change.

"This campaign is an opportunity to come together as a medical community, present these facts to decision makers, and demand that they take real action to protect everyone's health. This is an opportunity for us all to lead by example."

Head to www.doctorsforclimateaction.org to get the facts on the health impacts of climate change.

KEY FACTS:

- Increases in global temperature and changes to rainfall patterns will disrupt agricultural production, leading to food shortages and increased levels of malnutrition.
- Extreme weather events such as heatwaves, droughts and floods are likely to increase with climate change causing illness, injury, and loss of life. These events will lead to reduced air quality, changes to the spread of infectious diseases and could lead to adverse mental health impacts.
- The impact of climate change on global temperatures and rainfall affects the formation and dispersion of air pollutants. This will exacerbate rates of cardiovascular and respiratory disease resulting from air pollution, which in 2012 was estimated to be responsible for up to 7 million deaths worldwide.

Spokespeople available for media interview:

Laureate Professor Nick Talley
President of The Royal Australasian College of Physicians and Pro Vice-Chancellor and Professor
University of Newcastle

Dr Ashwin Swaminathan
Infectious Diseases Physician based in Canberra, Australian National University Medical School
Senior Lecturer

Dr Kate Charlesworth
Public Health Physician based in Sydney, worked at the Sustainable Development Unit in the UK
which is a world-leading unit tasked with reducing the carbon footprint of the National Health Service
(NHS)

Ends

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 14,950 physicians – often referred to as medical specialists – and 6,530 Trainee members across Australia and New Zealand. The College represents more than 34 medical specialties including paediatrics & child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology and public health medicine, occupational & environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients. www.racp.edu.au