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EDITORIAL

Climate change and health: the role of journals and editors

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On 4 September, the editors of many health journals worldwide jointly published a “Call for emergency action to limit global temperature increases, restore biodiversity, and protect health”.¹ Aimed at participants at the UN General Assembly, the article summarised how global warming detrimentally affects health, both directly and through food and water insecurity caused by environmental degradation. The article acknowledges that some progress is being made but points out that target setting is not being matched with credible actions and strategies. The authors call for interventions and investment on a scale similar to those many governments instigated in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. They write that global coordination is required, specifically “countries that have disproportionately created the environmental crisis must do more to support low-income and middle-income countries to build cleaner, healthier, and more resilient societies”. As individuals, health professionals should, the authors assert, hold global leaders to account and continue to educate others about the health risks of the crisis.

European Science Editing, and its parent organisation, the European Association of Science Editors (EASE), support this call and believe it extends to all scientists and all working in the publication, dissemination and implementation of scientific research. In June 2021, EASE launched its manifesto: Environmental sustainability and scientific publishing.² This outlines actions we can take, as editors, as journals, and as organisations focusing on eight areas (Environmental policy; Go digital, Print journal distribution; Office management; Food and drink; Employee management; Building management; and What actions are specific to editors as gatekeepers?). With publication of the manifesto, we now introduce a quick check table that can help you evaluate your sustainability at work and as an editor and plan possible future actions in increasing sustainability.² The table contains 10 questions, for example: “Does your journal still have a print edition?” or “Do you use bike or public transport or car sharing with your colleagues to get to work?” so you can quickly assess sustainability.

In particular, the manifesto highlights the influence editors have on the public discussion of science and states that “editors should actively take steps to advocate for, and implement, strategies to promote environmentally sustainable behaviour and research and mainstream these ideas into their respective fields”. So, we support the call of our editorial colleagues at health journals and urge all editors around the world, whatever their discipline, to use their position as a force for good and act now to help mitigate the effects of climate change.

References

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