

UEMS¹ STATEMENT ON ENVIRONMENT AND HEALTH

The UEMS Council gathered in Larnaca, Cyprus, October 19, 2012, considers promotion of environmental responsibility among healthcare workers, patients and whole society to be one of fundamental ethical obligations of medical specialists and all physicians.

1.

Evidence indicates that environmental problems, encompassing biological, chemical, physical, psychological, sociological, or site and location hazards have a substantial impact on human health. As disease can be also defined as «maladjustment of the human organism to the environment», emerging environmental challenges, such as climate change, global warming and air pollution, may result in new, significant hazards to human health, and can cause very serious burden on healthcare and medical professionals in the near future. Appropriate environmental policies should therefore be urgently implemented through consistent socio-economic programs, in order to develop the fundamental values of the management of the natural environment.

2.

The holistic concept of health recognizes the strength of social, economic, political and environmental influences on health. Scientific evidence shows also that there are opportunities for significant net benefits in limiting environmental degradation, not only for human health, but also for the economy.

3.

Physicians should be aware of environmental health problems and should continuously and repeatedly report them to authorities as well

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as inform their patients of environmental threats to health. Long lasting tradition of physicians' involvement in public affairs particularly public health, should motivate physicians to participate actively in protection of environment and to give a personal example of responsible environmental behaviour, using a methodological approach based on: a) sustainable development; b) health promotion; c) risk communication and participation in the risk management, even with the implementation of the precautionary principle; d) constant analysis of the risk-benefit ratio.

4.

We, the medical professionals' society as a whole should continue to support environmental policies as a key vector for reducing health damage and healthcare costs caused by environmental degradation. Such efforts could include more stringent legislation and implementation of appropriate environmental pollution control policies, cleaner and more efficient energy and transport policies that are environmentally sustainable. We should also support national, regional and local government bodies in the planning of strategic objectives and actions for the promotion and the protection of the environment and the health.

5.

Continuously and dynamically changing, expanding and technologically advanced healthcare delivery should be aware of its impact on environment.

Taking into account the above, UEMS calls upon medical specialists and all physicians to be actively involved in prevention of imminent environmental problems and to call attention of society and policymakers to preventive measures.

*Prepared on the basis of Discussion and Conclusions
of the 1st International Meeting on Ecological Bioethics,
held in Isernia, Italy, July 20-21, 2012*

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the patronage of UNESCO Chair in Bioethics Italian Unit, and European
Union of Medical Specialists, UEMS)*

THE ISERNIA DECLARATION ON DIET AND ITS EFFECT ON POPULATION HEALTH AND THE HEALTH OF THE PLANET

This conference recognizes that vast majority of European population does not face the challenge of daily hunger through poverty; has wide choice of foods and dietary habits. Through scientific research, understands the damage on human health of under-consumption and over-consumption, and;

Recognizes the impact that the prevalent model of food production, in Europe and in the other «developed countries», has in adding to the factors causing global climate disruption and environmental degradation;

Appreciates that the luxuries that we enjoy – in terms of food availability, ready access to information and education – are not available to all the peoples of our planet.

Accordingly, this conference:

Recognizes that good food, well-prepared, is an important part of the physical and social development and life of all peoples;

Encourages a more balanced diet, with increased emphasis on vegetarianism as part of that balanced diet;

Calls for greater education regarding foods that are known to have adverse health impacts: high sugar drinks; high fat fast foods; excess intake of animal protein; unsafe forms of cooking; unnecessary intake of vitamins and «dietary supplements»;

Supports increased exercise as part of a more balanced lifestyle;

Encourages government support for models of agriculture and animal rearing that take greater account of environmental and ethical issues;

Supports the sharing of these good models of agriculture, and the resources necessary for those, for the peoples of «developing countries», where the greatest population growth will occur over the coming decades.

*Proposed at the 2th International Meeting of Bioethics of Biosphere,
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*Approved by the FNOMCeO Central Committee
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*Approved and adopted by UEMS (European Union of Medical Specialists)
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