

Consequences of climate change and disrupted natural systems on health

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Planetary Health is a transdisciplinary field addressing the impacts of human disruptions of natural systems on human health and all life on earth. Consequences of climate change, declining biodiversity, and air- and water pollution are among the biggest threats to human health globally, and their relevance as global health challenges will certainly increase. The triad is often collectively named “the triple crisis”. The potential health consequences of planetary health challenges such as heatwaves, extreme weather events and spread of disease-carrying vectors, can be direct and therefore easy to document and communicate. Indirect effects, such as food- and water security or unhealth related to displacement of people, are more difficult to document and therefore to address.

The planetary health challenges are characterized by their interconnectedness and complexity, and they are all results of overexploitation of natural resources. Arguably “the triple crisis” could be addressed as one, overall overconsumption crisis, with climate change, pollution, and disrupted ecosystems as outcomes. This approach underscores the importance of including fair access to resources, inequity and planetary health ethics when addressing the potential health consequences of a changing climate, increasing pollution and declining biodiversity. A systems approach is needed to understand and prepare for complex challenges such as the potential direct and indirect consequences of climate change, pollution and disrupted ecosystems on human health.

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