ISSN: 2641-1784

Letter to Editor

Advance in Environmental Waste Management & Recycling

The Role of Nurses in Addressing Environmental Health: A Call to Action on Smog in Pakistan

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Submitted: 2024, Nov 08; **Accepted:** 2024, Nov 29; **Published:** 2024, Dec 18

Citation: Munawar, K. (2024). The Role of Nurses in Addressing Environmental Health: A Call to Action on Smog in Pakistan. *Adv Envi Wast Man Rec, 7*(3), 01.

I am writing to highlight the growing concern of environmental health and its direct impact on public well-being. Across the globe, environmental factors such as air quality, water contamination, and climate change are increasingly recognized as critical determinants of health. Nurses, as frontline healthcare professionals, are uniquely positioned to address these issues by advocating for healthier environments and promoting public awareness about the connection between environmental factors and health outcomes.

One of the most significant environmental health challenges in many countries today is poor air quality. Air pollution has been linked to a range of health conditions, from respiratory illnesses such as asthma and bronchitis to cardiovascular diseases and even cancer. While the importance of addressing air quality is recognized globally, the situation is particularly alarming in developing countries, where pollution levels often exceed safe limits.

In Pakistan, where I practice as a nurse, the problem of environmental health is reaching critical levels, particularly in urban areas. Smog, a dense mixture of air pollutants, has become a recurring and dangerous issue, especially during the winter months. Major cities like Lahore, Rawalpindi, and Karachi frequently experience hazardous levels of smog, which severely impacts public health. The consequences are far-reaching: respiratory diseases have surged, and many individuals, especially children and the elderly, are at an increased risk of serious health complications.

As a nurse, I have seen firsthand the toll that smog takes on our patients. Many of them experience worsening symptoms of asthma, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD), and other respiratory conditions due to the toxic air they breathe. Yet, beyond these immediate effects, there is often little attention given to the long-term health consequences of prolonged exposure to smog. Furthermore, mental health issues are rising as individuals face the stress and uncertainty of living in an environment where basic health needs—such as clean air—are not being met.

I believe that environmental health should be a central focus of nursing practice, particularly in regions like Pakistan where environmental issues like smog have such a profound impact. Nurses must be equipped with the knowledge and skills to educate the public about the risks associated with poor air quality. This includes providing advice on protective measures, such as wearing face masks, staying indoors during high pollution days, and promoting a healthy lifestyle that supports respiratory health. Additionally, nurses can advocate for policy changes that prioritize the health of our communities. Tackling the issue of smog requires not only individual awareness but also systemic change, such as stricter emissions regulations, better urban planning, and the promotion of green spaces to reduce pollution.

As healthcare professionals, we must broaden our focus from just treating the effects of illness to addressing the root causes of those illnesses, which often lie in our environment. I urge your journal to consider expanding its discussions on the intersection of environmental health and nursing practice, particularly in contexts like Pakistan, where the impact of pollution is dire.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue. I look forward to seeing more coverage and discourse on how nurses can contribute to solving the environmental health challenges facing our world today.