

## Rising Climates and the Impact of Healthcare



Climate change concerns are becoming more and more difficult to ignore, with disruptions causing issues for health, businesses and people's lives in general. To make a positive change businesses need to find ways of becoming sustainable, but how should healthcare management fit this into their ever-conflicting list of priorities?

Through the increased occurrence of natural disasters and contributions to carbon emissions, the mission of healthcare systems to lower their effects on climate change can cause financial and structural complications. Despite this, more and more health systems are leading the way to carbon neutrality whilst simultaneously expanding and improving the quality of the care provided.

A main concern for hospitals is having preparations in place to stay open for patient access during emergencies. Natural disasters such as hurricanes, wildfires and floods not only pose a threat to the availability of the hospital but also the subsequent pattern of diseases and the vulnerabilities in the population. In response to this, health systems in Boston, USA, have made efforts to prepare for a potential rise in sea levels.

Health systems not only feel pressure to implement action because of possible future events but also because the effects of climate change are impacting health systems now. The California wildfires caused health workers of the surrounding areas to lose their homes and hospitals had to close for several weeks, whilst many residents suffered from smoke-related illnesses.

### Winning Strategies

Cutting unnecessary energy usage is a big focus when it comes to hospitals making efforts to go greener. The affordable option of renewable energy resources has become popular for the energy that the hospital still needs to use.

Sometimes the desire to make positive efforts does not match the budget available, especially with the slim margins of not-for-profit organisations. However, these hospitals can propose these changes to their boards as there is often a correlation between energy-saving and cost-saving initiatives, and even small changes can make a huge impact.

Leadership at the Cleveland Clinic discovered two areas in which they could promote change: computers and light bulbs. By making the change to low-energy LED lights the clinic was able to save \$2.5 million a year and also enhance the patient experience by improving the quality of the lights. In regards to medical-grade computers, these always need to be switched on, however, with over 50,000 of these computers in one hospital a lot of energy was being used by this resource. By installing a software which was able to keep all essential programmes in standby mode but the computers in sleep mode, the clinic was able to save \$400,000 per year.

Funding for these initiatives can come in the form of cost-sharing with other partners, sustainability-focused investors, and also through creating valuable partnerships. For example, BMC was able to implement an energy-efficient backup power plant by having their local energy provider agree to additional incentives.

These efforts made by hospital organisations, large and small, recognise the increasing need to address climate change. By joining this global movement, sustainability-focused healthcare organisations are leading the way for the rest of the industry.

Source: [Harvard Business Review](#)

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