

## Sustainable Healthcare: A Global Perspective on Progress



Sustainability in healthcare is increasingly recognised as essential to ensuring positive health outcomes, equity and environmental responsibility. As healthcare systems worldwide adopt sustainable practices, the challenge remains to integrate these effectively into existing structures. At the World Hospital Congress (WHC) in Rio de Janeiro in September 2024, the International Hospital Federation's (IHF) Geneva Sustainability Centre showcased key sustainability initiatives from diverse regions, illustrating the impact of systemic collaboration and digital tools. The Sustainability Accelerator Tool (SAT) emerged as a pivotal innovation, supporting hospitals in achieving low-carbon, resilient and equitable healthcare. The event underscored the significance of sustainability in healthcare and demonstrated how institutions worldwide are leveraging structured tools to make meaningful progress.

### System-Wide Sustainability in Singapore

Singapore has demonstrated a comprehensive approach to sustainable healthcare, leveraging its national Green Plan 2030 to drive systemic change. Sustainability efforts extend beyond individual hospitals to a coordinated nationwide effort across its 12 public hospitals. A key element of this transformation has been water conservation, aligning with Singapore's historical reliance on the Singapore River. The SAT has played a crucial role in enabling system-wide collaboration, allowing hospitals to share best practices, set benchmarks and collectively advance environmental goals.

The success of Singapore's sustainability approach lies in the ability of hospitals to work together as a group rather than in isolation. This coordinated strategy allows them to learn from each other, adapt solutions to local contexts and achieve collective progress more efficiently. The SAT helps to facilitate this collaboration by providing a structured assessment framework, enabling hospitals to track their sustainability progress against national targets. This integration with broader environmental policies ensures that healthcare institutions are actively contributing to Singapore's sustainability ambitions, particularly in reducing carbon emissions and embracing a circular economy.

### Pioneering Sustainable Innovation in the United States

Hackensack Meridian Health in New Jersey has long prioritised sustainability as a fundamental aspect of healthcare delivery. With decades of commitment to green practices, it has positioned itself as a leader in sustainable healthcare, becoming the first U.S. healthcare system to achieve Joint Commission Sustainable Healthcare Certification. The organisation has integrated the SAT to unify its sustainability initiatives, reinforcing a holistic approach that spans all levels of operations.

A key component of Hackensack Meridian Health's strategy has been embedding sustainability into the workforce culture. Sustainability efforts are not confined to a single department but are instead incorporated throughout the organisation, ensuring that every team member is actively engaged in reducing environmental impact. The organisation's ability to integrate sustainability into everyday operations has made it a national leader in the field, demonstrating the power of long-term commitment and structured implementation. By continuously developing and implementing innovative sustainability strategies, Hackensack Meridian Health exemplifies the long-term benefits of institutional commitment to green healthcare.

### Tailored Sustainability Strategies in Spain

Mútua Terrassa in Barcelona offers an example of how hospitals can integrate sustainability initiatives at an institutional level. Already committed to a climate action plan, the hospital has enhanced its efforts by using the SAT to refine and expand its sustainability framework. The SAT provided a structured approach, incorporating over 50 new action points aligned with its existing goals. This structured process allowed the hospital to build upon its previous sustainability efforts, ensuring that progress was both measurable and effective.

Workforce engagement has been a key factor in ensuring successful implementation, supported by insights gained from Geneva Sustainability Centre's executive masterclass. The success of sustainability initiatives relies on hospital staff being well-informed and actively engaged in the implementation process. By fostering a culture of environmental responsibility within the organisation, Mútua Terrassa has been able to accelerate its sustainability efforts significantly. Its structured and detailed approach demonstrates how sustainability can be successfully tailored

to fit the specific needs of individual hospitals while remaining aligned with larger healthcare objectives.

The integration of sustainability in healthcare is no longer an optional commitment but a necessity for building resilient and equitable health systems. The case studies from Singapore, the United States and Spain highlight the diverse ways in which hospitals can leverage digital tools such as the SAT to advance sustainability goals. Whether at a national, system-wide or institutional level, the key to success lies in collaboration, workforce engagement and strategic implementation.

A structured approach to sustainability enables hospitals to track progress effectively, identify areas for improvement and align their efforts with broader environmental objectives. The use of tools such as the SAT provides crucial support in assessing sustainability performance and guiding action plans. By embracing sustainability at all levels, hospitals and healthcare organisations worldwide can contribute to a healthier planet while delivering better healthcare outcomes for all.

**Source:** [International Hospital Federation](#)

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