

Clean Water Saves Lives

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INTRODUCTION

In 2015, the United Nations came up with a list of 17 goals for sustainable development that it aims to achieve by the year 2030. It focuses on various areas of improvement on a global level. The sixth goal on the list is to ensure availability and sustainable management of water and sanitation for all (United Nations, 2015).

The sustainable development goals all have subgoals within them, known as targets. A target of goal number six is to achieve access to adequate and equitable sanitation and hygiene for all. Meeting this will save lives across the world.

SIGNIFICANCE

- Across the world, 785 million people do not have access to a reliable source of clean water. (CDC, 2021).
- “Unsafe drinking water contributed to 72% of diarrheal deaths while unsafe sanitation contributes to about 56% of diarrheal diseases” (CDC, 2021, para. 14).
- An estimated 446,000 children younger than 5 years old die from diarrhea each year, mostly in developing countries (CDC, 2021, para. 7).
- Healthcare facilities in low and middle income countries show (Cronk & Bartram, 2018):
 - 50% of health care facilities lack piped water, 33% lack proper toilets, 39% lack handwashing soap
 - 39% of health care facilities lack infectious waste disposal
 - 2% provide all services of water, sanitation, hygiene and waste disposal

POSITION STATEMENT

Access to adequate and equitable sanitation for all is critical in saving lives not just in health care, but in every area of the world.

SUPPORT FOR POSITION

- “Water, sanitation and hygiene has the potential to prevent at least 9.1% of the global disease burden and 6.3% of all deaths” (CDC, 2021, para. 17).
- “Insufficient piped water on the facility premises limits, hand washing, performing safe surgeries, performing safe deliveries, and cleaning” (Cronk & Bartram, 2018, para. 46)
- “Improved sanitation contributed to a 15% decreases in diarrheal deaths in Southeast Asia, East Asia, and Oceania, and more than a 10% decrease in deaths globally” (CDC, 2021, para. 15)
- “Adequate hand hygiene, such as hand washing with soap, is a cost effective practice for preventing infection in health care settings” (Cronk & Bartram, 2018, para. 4)



Clean Water and Sanitation (United Nations, 2015)

IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE



Sustainable Development (Skoll, 2019)

- Unicef has had the WASH project since the 1990s and since then they have given clean water to 2.6 billion people (CKI, n.d.).
- Through Circle K and Unicef, donating and fundraising will continue to be successful in providing water and sanitation to places in need, including health care facilities. (CKI, n.d.)
- Un “Water and sanitation interventions are cost effective across all world regions. These were demonstrated to produce to economic benefits ranging from \$5 to \$46 per dollar invested” (CDC, 2021, para. 16)
- The Center for Affordable Water and Sanitation Technology finds that providing the following is effective in improving Clean Water and Sanitation in health care facilities (2019):
 - Training on site staff on how to properly maintain water treatment technology
 - Rainwater harvest in healthcare facilities
 - Assessing the needs of every healthcare facility
 - Design of necessary sanitary and hygiene systems
 - Continuous gathering of data to apply appropriate changes

CONCLUSION

The evidence suggests that there are health care facilities all over the world that do not have access to clean water. Not only that, but there are communities that do not have clean water access either. This means that there are health care facilities that can not provide adequate care to their patients due to lack of sanitation.

There are humanitarian projects working to supply health care facilities and communities with safe water and sanitation. So far, Unicef and companies alike have made great strides in those areas but still have a long way to go.

As future health care employees we should do our best to advocate for clean water in all corners of the world. With sanitation being more important than ever, humanitarian groups are not going to stop until everyone has clean water.

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