

REACTION PAPER 3

Epstein - "Climate and Health"

"Averages don't kill people - it is the extremes." The issue, is how are we going to adapt? If we don't do something to mitigate the potential human health effects of climate change, the world, beginning at the local and regional level, will begin to experience climate-related catastrophe.

As a result, governments and health officials need to begin to think about how to respond to an anticipated increase in the number and scope of climate-related health crises, ranging from killer heat waves and famine, to floods and waves of infectious diseases.

Epstein - "Is Global Warming Harmful to Health?"

As the world's climate warms, and as people make widespread alterations to the global landscape, human populations will become far more vulnerable to heat-related mortality, air pollution-related illnesses, infectious diseases and malnutrition. Moreover, as temperature regimes change, weather patterns will be altered and increased rainfall will facilitate the spread of waterborne and food-borne disease. And increased local rainfall also will make life easier for the insects and animals that carry some human diseases.

"The key will be early detection, warning and responding to threats,"

One strategy to mitigate future climate-related health problems would be to develop and use climate forecasts and warning systems to avert disease and adverse health outcomes. Such tools are already coming into play. Strong El Nino events, for example, tend to trigger heavier rainfall in the American southwest, setting the stage for rodent population booms and increased risk of exposure to hanta virus, a sometimes deadly disease transmitted through rodent urine and droppings. Such events can be predicted with confidence, and if higher risk is forecast, people can prepare by mouse-proofing their homes and taking other measures to minimize contact with the source of a serious disease.

Epstein and McCarthy - "Assessing Climate Stability"

Humanity has the hardware in hand to halt the rise in heat-trapping greenhouse gases it pumps into the atmosphere and forestall the worst effects of global warming projected for the end of this century.

The goal could be achieved within the next 50 years by more widespread use of a portfolio of at least 15 approaches - from energy efficiency, solar energy, and wind power

to nuclear energy and the preservation or enhancement of "natural" sinks for carbon dioxide such as rain forests, or the conservation tillage techniques on farms worldwide,

Like it or not, the industrialized countries - which are responsible for the climatic tragedy that is occurring - have a great problem to solve and that is the reduction of emissions and the transition to clean, renewable and low-impact energy sources. Only then could a solution to safeguard the future of the Earth and its inhabitants become possible.