



Climate change related illnesses

“...identify health care services for which there are substantial variation in practice patterns or high utilization trends in Washington state, without producing better care outcomes for patients, that are indicators of poor quality and potential waste in the health care system.”

PROBLEM STATEMENT:
Climate change is widespread, rapid, and intensifying with a direct impact on health on a regional level. ⁱ Washington has seen an increase in climate related illnesses including but not limited to: heat related illnesses especially during extreme heat events, respiratory disease secondary to deteriorated air quality, and water related illnesses due to ocean acidification and warming bodies of water. During the heat dome of 2021, over 400 Washingtonians lost their lives due to heat related illnesses.
DOES THE TOPIC HAVE (CHECK ALL THAT APPLY):
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> VARIATION IN CARE <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SAFETY CONCERNS
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> HIGH COST AND POOR OUTCOMES <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EQUITY CONCERNS
EXPLAIN:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Variation in care: Need for more coordinated responses to address health concerns during extreme weather events and natural disasters such as heat waves and wildfires • High cost and poor outcomes: Excess ED visits, hospitalizations have resulted from extreme weather events • Safety concerns: Lack of a coordinated response leads to poorer outcomes and death – over 400 excess deaths were documented during the extreme heat event of 2021 • Equity concerns: Low SES and minority groups are more exposed to the effects of extreme weather events and have fewer resources to cope with the impacts
PROPOSED SCOPE:
Strategies for response to illness due to climate change including: wildfire smoke, heat related illnesses, and water related illnesses. This includes effective communication strategies with patients, system coordination across organizations and jurisdictions, and clinical decision making.
EVIDENCE-BASED IMPACT STRATEGY:
Evidence-based clinical protocols exist in adaptation and mitigation response to climate change and health related to the scope outlined above including the UW Climate Impacts Group Report on Extreme Heat: CIG-Report-Heat-202-pages.pdf (uw.edu) ; Treatment and Prevention of Heat-Related Illness NEJM ; Protecting Pregnant People and Babies from the Health Effects of Climate Change NEJM ; Wildfires, Global Climate Change, and Human Health NEJM ;
AVAILABLE DATA:
Data from the office of financial management Ecology Health Services research, claims data looking at ED visits, excess mortality
POTENTIAL PARTNERS:
Health systems, Payers/purchasers, Patient representatives, Public Health entities (counties, DOH)
HOW MAY A BREE REPORT ON THIS TOPIC SUPPORT THE HEALTH OF WASHINGTONIANS:
As arguably the ultimate social determinant of health, climate change poses a great threat to the health of Washingtonians, and the WA health care industry has a significant role in responding to those threats. A Bree report would be beneficial in outlining tactics and strategies to address those roles on a multi-sector basis and a forum bringing together leaders for focus to this urgent issue.

ⁱ <https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/nejmra1807873>