

Health Professionals' Education & the Environment

Leyla Erk McCurdy
November 6, 2007

Winner of



National Environmental
Education Foundation
Knowledge to live by

National Environmental Education Foundation

- ◆ Private, non-profit organization committed to improving environmental literacy and advancing environmental health knowledge among healthcare providers.
- ◆ Strategic long term initiatives to integrate environmental health into healthcare: Working with health professional organizations, healthcare providers, and other stake holders creates tools, conducts trainings and other educational and outreach activities.

Health Professionals' Education and the Environment

- ◆ **With** the myriad of environmental issues impacting our communities and our world, the public expects their health care providers to be prepared to address the health consequences of environmental exposures, but all too often providers are not equipped to respond effectively.
- ◆ The need for improvements in health professionals' environmental health knowledge has been expressed by leading health institutions.

Health Professionals and Environmental Health Education Position Statement

Makes the case for the need for environmental health education and lists the specific actions necessary to successfully incorporate environmental health information into the education of health professionals. Endorsed by 27 organizations including:

- American Academy of Pediatrics
- American Association of Colleges of Nursing
- American College of Preventive Medicine
- American Nurses Association
- American Public Health Association
- Association of Academic Health Centers
- Association of Occupational and Environmental Clinics
- National Association of Pediatric Nurse Practitioners

www.neefusa.org/health

Health Professionals' Education and the Environment

NCSE 2007

Integrating Environment and Human Health Conference

Goal: explore the most effective ways to improve health professionals' environmental health knowledge

Chair: Leyla McCurdy, National Environmental Education Foundation

Discussants:

- ◆ Marie-Noel Brune, World Health Organization
- ◆ Floyd J. Malveaux, Merck Childhood Asthma Network
- ◆ Elisabeth Blackburn, U.S. Environmental Protection Agency

Recommendations

- ◆ Number of questions about environmental health, including emerging issues, should be increased on certification and board examinations
- ◆ Faculty and students from various academic backgrounds should collaborate to promote a multi-disciplinary/trans-disciplinary approach, which includes environmental health education
- ◆ Academic institutions should create incentives for faculty members to develop expertise to incorporate environmental health into curricula
- ◆ Faculty members should use community-based approaches in teaching environmental health and endorse the development of environmental health modules
- ◆ Medical school faculty should incorporate environmental competency into residency programs

Recommendations

- ◆ Government agencies and private funders should increase funding for developing centers of environmental health expertise and a network of health professionals who are experts in environmental health, including emerging issues
- ◆ Government agencies should develop mechanisms to provide sustained funding for centers of environmental health expertise for the purpose of training health care professionals and providing consultative services
- ◆ Health professional and public health organizations should develop awards and recognize individuals for integration of environmental health into health professionals' education

Recommendations

- ◆ Environmental problems disproportionately impact low income people and people of color. To bring diverse perspectives to health professional education and to adequately address the environmental health needs of underserved communities, recruitment efforts should focus on these communities, and incentives should be created for underrepresented individuals such as racial and ethnic minorities to pursue careers in environmental health, medicine, nursing, public health and other health fields.

Recommendations

- ◆ Professional associations, decision-making bodies, academic institutions, and practice settings of healthcare providers should endorse the need to address health conditions associated with environmental exposures, and:
 - ◆ Adopt environmental health education and practice skill standards so that health care providers learn and integrate information about environmental exposures in clinical, educational, and preventive health care activities
 - ◆ Incorporate clearly defined environmental exposure educational competencies and practice skills, including the ability to elicit an environmental exposure history, into health care provider education and practice.
 - ◆ Use validated tools and resources to recognize, manage, and prevent adverse health effects from environmental exposure

(Continued)

Recommendations

- ◆ Appoint environmental health “faculty champion” at medical, nursing, and other health professions schools to ensure long-term integration of environmental health content into their curricula
- ◆ Update requirements in medical, nursing, and other health care provider education to include the recognition, management, and prevention of health effects related to environmental exposures
- ◆ Promote incentives for faculty to teach core competencies, including financial incentives in the form of grants for faculty development, curriculum development, research, instructional teaching and training aids, and expert consultants, clinical access, release time for faculty development, curricula development, and establishing appropriate clinical sites and teaching venues facilitate access to environmental health continuing education programs

Contact Information

Leyla Erk McCurdy

Senior Director, Health & Environment

National Environmental Education Foundation

4301 Connecticut Ave., Suite 160

Washington DC, 20008

Phone: 202-261-6488

Fax: 202-261-6464

Email: mccurdy@neefusa.org

www.neefusa.org