



PLANETARY HEALTH WEEKLY

BRINGING YOU CURRENT NEWS ON GLOBAL HEALTH & ECOLOGICAL WELLNESS

November 1, 2018 planetaryhealthweekly.com Volume 4, Number 44

WE HAVE 12 YEARS TO LIMIT CLIMATE CHANGE CATASTROPHE

The authors of the recent landmark report by the UN Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) say urgent and unprecedented changes are needed to reach the Paris target (of 1.5C-2.0C global temperature rise), which they say is affordable and feasible. The world is currently 1C warmer than preindustrial levels. The IPCC makes clear that climate change is already happening, upgraded its risk warning from previous reports, and warned that every fraction of additional warming would worsen the impact. But the greatest difference will be to nature. Insects, which are vital for pollination of crops, and plants are almost twice as likely to lose half their habitat with 2C compared with 1.5C. Corals would be 99% lost at 2.0C, and only some 10% have a chance of surviving if the lower target is reached. [Read More at The Guardian](#)



Credit: Ringo HW Chiu/AP

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'ONE OF THE GREATEST PUBLIC HEALTH CHALLENGES OF OUR TIME.' THE U.K. JUST ROLLED OUT ITS PLAN FOR FIGHTING LONELINESS

The British government is taking on loneliness, one dance class at a time. Prime Minister Theresa May appointed a minister for loneliness in January. Now the government is rolling out a strategy to tackle the issue head on. The strategy has three goals: to better understand what causes loneliness, its impacts and what works to tackle it; to embed loneliness as a consideration across government policy, to the benefit of all of society as well as tailored interventions for specific triggers; and to build a national conversation around loneliness and overcome stigma surrounding it. The government found that as many as one-fifth of UK adults feel lonely most or all of the time, which can have effects as detrimental as obesity or smoking. Three-quarters of doctors surveyed in the U.K. said one to five people visit them a day seeking help for loneliness and approximately 200,000 older people can go more than a month without speaking to a friend or a relative, leading May to deem loneliness "one of the greatest public health challenges of our time."

[Read More at Fortune](#)



Credit: Getty Images





Credit: Mark Ralston/AFP/Getty Images

IT'S NO LONGER FREE TO POLLUTE ANYWHERE IN CANADA

Prime Minister Trudeau is setting a new course for carbon pricing in Canada. "Canadians know that polluting isn't free," adds Catherine McKenna, Minister of Environment and Climate Change. "We are all paying the cost of storms, floods, wildfires and extreme heat. Our government is ensuring a price across Canada on what we don't want, pollution, so we can get what we do want – lower emissions, cleaner air, opportunities for businesses with clean solutions, and more money in the pockets of Canadians." Canada's federal policy is a backstop to cover the four provinces that have not initiated their own carbon-pricing policies. Nearly half of Canadians live in these provinces. The policy also includes extra support for small, rural and remote Canadian communities, but it excludes the giant LPG project planned for British Columbia.

[Read More at Below2C](#)

See Also at CBC: [What is a carbon tax, and will it make a difference?](#)

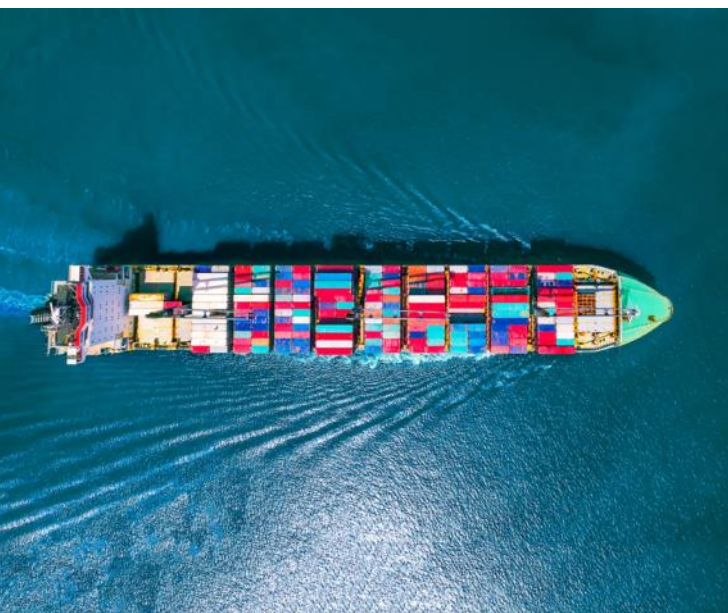
See Also at The Star: [Trudeau's new carbon proposal a can't-lose gambit](#)

EX-UN LEADER HELPS LAUNCH CLIMATE 'ADAPTATION' INITIATIVE

Former UN Secretary-General Ban Ki-moon appealed for a sense of urgency as he launched a new commission that aims to accelerate and expand ways the world can prepare for climate change. "Without urgent adaptation action, we risk undermining food, energy and water security for decades to come," Ban told guests as the Global Commission on Adaptation in The Hague. "The costs of adapting are less than the cost of doing business as usual," Ban said. "And the benefits many times larger." The choice of the Netherlands for the commission's opening was not a coincidence; a good chunk of the flood-prone European country already lies below sea level and finding ways to mitigate damage has been a focus. [Read More at AP News](#)



Credit: Mosa'ab Elshamy



Credit: Anucha Sirivisanuwan/Getty Images

AS THE ARCTIC MELTS, THE NORTHERN SEA ROUTE OPENS FOR BUSINESS

Years of melting ice have made it easier for ships to ply the Arctic's frigid waters. That's a boon for the shipping industry but a threat to the fragile Arctic ecosystem. Nearly all ships run on fossil fuels, and many use heavy fuel oil, which spews black soot when burned and turns seas into a toxic goopy mess when spilled. But few international rules are in place to protect the Arctic's environment from these ships, though a proposal to ban heavy fuel oil from the region is gaining support. The HFO-Free Arctic Campaign says that the best way to avoid fouling the Arctic is to ditch fossil fuels entirely and install electric systems with, say, battery storage or hydrogen fuel cells. In April, the International Maritime Organization, the U.N. body that regulates the shipping industry, began laying the groundwork to ban ships from using or carrying heavy fuel oil in the Arctic. Given the lengthy rulemaking process, any policy won't likely take effect before 2021. [Read More at Wired](#)



127 PARALYZING POLIO-LIKE CASES MAINLY AFFECTING CHILDREN CONFIRMED OR SUSPECTED IN 22 US STATES; SIMILAR IN CANADA

Federal health officials took the unusual step on Tuesday of warning the public about an increase in a mysterious and rare condition that mostly affects children and can cause paralysis. So far this year, 127 confirmed or suspected cases of acute flaccid myelitis, or AFM, have been reported to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. Of the cases announced Tuesday, 62 have been confirmed in 22 states, according to Nancy Messonnier, a top official at the CDC. More than 90 percent of the confirmed cases have been in children 18 and younger, with the average age being 4 years old. The surge has baffled health officials, who on Tuesday announces a change in the way the agency is counting cases. They also wanted to raise awareness about the condition so parent can seek medical care if their child develops symptoms, and so physicians can quickly relay reports of the potential illness to the CDC. [Read More at Patient-Centered Primary Care Collaborative](#)

See Also at The Star: [Parents warned of serious but rare paralyzing condition in children in Canada](#)

See Also at Washington Post: [Paralyzing polio-like illness mainly affecting children confirmed in 22 states, CDC says](#)

Credit: Kayana Szymczak

US GOVERNMENT LAUNCHES INVESTIGATION INTO AMERICA'S RISING MATERNAL MORTALITY RATES

The United States has consistently seen very high maternal mortality rates—and they're only getting higher. Thanks to the work of advocates, the issue has gotten increasing attention, including an investigation by *USA Today* about the ways the system fails patients in childbirth. This week the Congressional Committee on Ways and Means announced it is launching an investigation into the country's high maternal mortality rates to see what can be done by both health systems and the government. As a part of the investigation, it sent a letter to 15 of the country's largest hospital systems, which together were responsible for delivering more than one in five babies in 2015. Trying to fix the problem is inherently good, but problems are many.

[Read More at Daily Kos](#)



Credit: Shutterstock



LEAD EXPOSURE IS POISONING THE FUTURE OF OUR CHILDREN

Years after lead in paint and petrol was banned in many parts of world, this toxic heavy metal continues to pose a threat to people's health as well as the environment – particularly in developing countries, where the major source of lead exposure to children is from paint. Children who live in low- and middle-income countries, where there are few or no governmental controls on lead in paint, are disproportionately affected. Only 69 countries have adopted lead paint laws. The World Health Organization has 194 Member States. We call on each and every country to develop their laws by 2020," says Maria Neira, Director of the Department of Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health at the World Health Organization. Every year the Global Alliance to Eliminate Lead Paint provides resources to help campaigners plan events during the International Lead Poisoning Prevention Week. [Read More at UN Environment](#)

See Also at UNEP: [Update on the Global Status of Legal Limits on Lead in Paint September 2018](#)

Credit: Bill Wegener /Unsplash



IS FLYING THE NEW SMOKING? IF SO, SHOULD AID WORKERS STOP FLYING?

Flying is an important contributor to global heating, and by far one of the most complicated. There are no signs that flying will be reduced and technical solutions to reduce carbon emissions are a long way off and not very feasible. Unlike cars, electric planes are not an option – flying a plane would require its entire space to be filled with batteries. There is now a call for environmental guidelines within the UN. What, only now? Shocking, right? But let's be honest, the whole aid and development world – UN, NGOs and my own world of academic departments and development studies – is shamefully late in taking responsibility. However, offsetting is a first step. But compensation programs can only ever be a first small step. Next comes sharply reducing the number of flights we take. [Read More at Oxfam Blogs](#)

Credit: Shutterstock

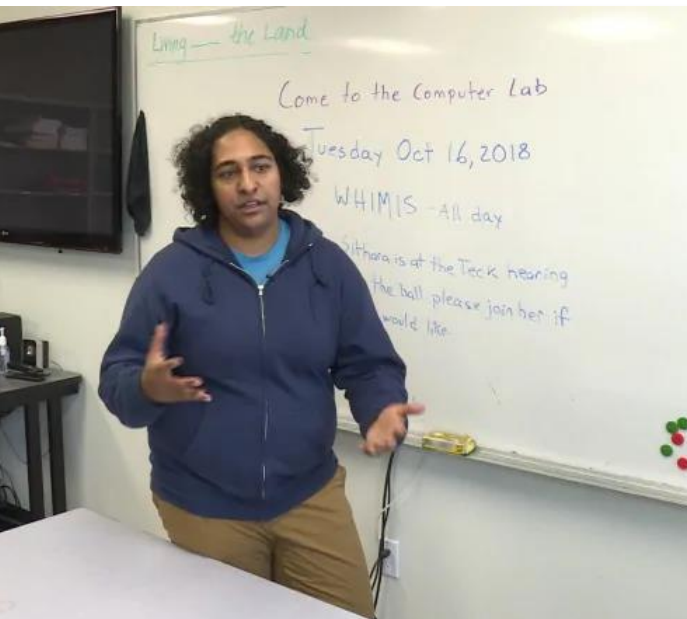
SPOTLIGHT ON POLICY:

HOW MUCH EVIDENCE IS THERE THAT POLITICAL FACTORS ARE RELATED TO POPULATION HEALTH OUTCOMES? AN INTERNATIONALLY COMPARATIVE SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

Here is a 7-year update of the most recent systematic review about the relationships between political features and population health outcomes. Ten scholarly bibliographic databases plus supplementary searches in bibliographies and Google Scholar were used to update a previous systematic review. Any population health outcome measure, apart from healthcare spending, was included. Of the 17 studies that assessed political tradition, 15 were found to show a positive association with the left-of-centre tradition. 44 studies assessed democracy and 34 found a positive association. 28 studies assessed globalization and 14 found a negative association, while seven were positive and seven inconclusive. This review concludes that welfare state generosity, left-of-centre democratic political tradition and democracy are generally positively associated with better population health. [Read More at BMJ Journals](#)



Credit: Edward Ehlinger



SPOTLIGHT ON INDIGENOUS WELLNESS: BRAIDING WESTERN SCIENCE AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE: NEW ENVIRONMENTAL MONITORING PROGRAM LAUNCHES

A new college program aims to combine Indigenous traditional knowledge and modern science to empower the next generation of environmental monitors in the oilsands. Keyano College launched the program in October and its first group of 11 students is studying in Fort Chipewyan, Alberta. The community's Indigenous groups have long raised concerns about pollution from industry and low water levels from dams, pulp mills and oilsands projects. The program is the only one in Canada that combines modern techniques and Indigenous traditional knowledge, said Sithara Fernando, the program's instructor. Fernando acknowledges there's a long standing tension between science that emphasizes formal systematic inquiry and Indigenous traditional knowledge that tends to rely on oral tradition, ceremonies and spirituality to find truth. "Without that tension the students don't get any value. If I was to braid with only Western science the braid will fall apart." [Read More at CBC News](#)

Credit: David Thurton/ CBC



QUOTE OF THE WEEK

“IT’S ALL ABOUT COLLABORATION. WE WOULDN’T BE ABLE TO DO THIS JUST BY OURSELVES.”

Seray Çiçek, Masters student in Professor Keith Pardee’s lab at the Leslie Dan Faculty of Pharmacy, University of Toronto on the development of a portable machine to accurately test for viruses any where in the world. [Read More at University of Toronto](#)

Credit: Keith Pardee

EVENTSTABLE

DATE	CONFERENCE	LOCATION	REGISTER
Nov. 6th-13th	Course announcement: The Struggle for Health	Savar Bangladesh	https://iphu.org/en/announcement/iphu-savar2018
Nov. 8th-9th	Workshop: Rules of the Road 2.0	Washington USA	https://www.cugh.org/events/workshop-rules-road-20
Nov. 15th-19th	4th People’s Health Assembly	Dhaka Bangladesh	https://archive.phmovement.org/en/node/10805
Nov. 19th-21st	Canadian Conference on Global Health	Toronto Canada	http://www.csih.org/en/events/canadian-conference-global-health
Mar. 8th-10th	10th Annual CUGH Conference—Translation and Implementation for Impact in Global Health	Chicago USA	https://www.cugh.org/events/2019-annual-cugh-global-health-conference
Apr. 30-May 2	Public Health 2019 (CPHA)	Ottawa Canada	https://www.cpha.ca/public-health-2019-program



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HEAVY LIFTERS, WOMEN RISING FOR THE EARTH AND MORE



Credit: Joe Tighe

We want to draw your attention to *Earth Island Journal's* new website as well as their special issue dedicated to the theme of women and the environment. The research on climate denialism suggests a distinct gender component to it: The vast majority of climate denialists are men. Read about climate scientist Katharine Hayhoe who says her online experience backs that up.

One of Hayhoe's greatest contributions to the field — her skills in communicating climate science to the public and, particularly as an outspoken Christian, and her ability to reach those who skew toward the right of the political spectrum — has also been an obstacle in her career. "If you do outreach, you're not a serious scientist," she says. "So because I'm a woman and I do outreach, I've had to have a CV that's twice as good as my male colleagues in order to be promoted. And I worked hard and did it, but I had to kill myself to get the publications and the grants so that they couldn't dismiss me for being 'fluffy.'"

[Read More at Earth Island Journal](#)





BET ON CARBON CAPTURE (BUT NOT ONLY ON CARBON CAPTURE)



Credit: Shammi Mehra

It's past time to start investing in technology to suck carbon out of the atmosphere — at the source of carbon emissions, and, ultimately, directly from the air. There have been enough small-scale demonstrations that show so-called carbon capture can work, and enough independent reports showing that we can't avoid dangerous global warming without it.

The new report from the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change asserts that even if the world manages to keep global warming at just 2 degrees Celsius — the goal of the Paris climate agreement — there will be dire consequences, including crop failures and sea level rise. The committee recommends avoiding warming beyond 1.5 degrees Celsius (2.7 Fahrenheit) above pre-industrial levels. According to climate models, business as usual will lead to a rise of 4 degrees Celsius (7F) , or maybe more, by the end of the century.

[Read More at Technology & Ideas](#)



'SOCIALISING' PRIMARY CARE? THE SOVIET UNION, WHO AND THE 1978 ALMA-ATA CONFERENCE



Credit: PAHO/WHO

40 years ago, in September 1978, the World Health Organization convened a momentous International Conference on Primary Health Care in Alma-Ata, capital of the Soviet Republic of Kazakhstan. This unprecedented gathering signalled a break with WHO's long-standing technically oriented disease eradication campaigns. Instead, Alma-Ata emphasised a community-based, social justice-oriented approach to health. Existing historical accounts of the conference, largely based on WHO sources, have characterized it as a Soviet triumph.

Such reasoning, embedded in Cold War logic, contradicts both the decision-making processes in Geneva and Moscow that led the conference to be held in the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and the reality that the highest Soviet authorities did not consider it a significant ideological or political opportunity. To redress the omissions and assumptions of prior accounts, this article examines the Alma-Ata conference in the context of Soviet political and health developments, drawing from Soviet archival and published sources as well as WHO materials and interviews with several key Soviet protagonists.

[Read More at BMJ Global Health](#)



WHY INDONESIA'S RULES ON FOREIGN TSUNAMI RELIEF ARE RATTLING THE AID SECTOR



Credit: IRIN/Olagondronk/AFP

The government has told international aid groups that foreign staff will not be allowed on the ground in Central Sulawesi Province, which was hit by 28 September earthquakes and a tsunami that washed away homes, destroyed entire neighbourhoods, and uprooted more than 80,000 people. More than 2,100 people are confirmed dead, and these numbers are set to rise after the government officially called off search and rescue operations.

The regulations, which were first enforced during a separate earthquake that rattled the island of Lombok in August, left some international aid groups scrambling to clarify the rules nearly three weeks after the Sulawesi response began. A staff member at an international NGO told IRIN that several agencies are meeting with government ministries to propose programs and to gauge what will be allowed. “The confusing thing is that the Indonesian government asked for international assistance. So if they hadn’t asked for international assistance, that would be one thing,” said the aid worker. [Read More at IRIN News](#)





ROMER AND NORDHAUS: WORTHY NOBEL WINNERS AND APOSTLES OF PROGRESS



Credit: Spencer Platt / Getty Images

William Nordhaus and Paul Romer were recently awarded the Nobel Prize in Economics. Nordhaus, the Sterling Professor of Economics at Yale University, is best known for his work in economic modelling and climate change. Romer, who teaches at New York University, is a pioneer of endogenous growth theory, which holds that investment in human capital, innovation and knowledge are significant contributors to economic growth.

In Nordhaus's 1996 paper, *Do Real-Output and Real-Wage Measures Capture Reality? The History of Lighting Suggests Not*, he looked at the economics of light. Open fire, he noted, produced a mere 4.44679 lumens per watt. Now, consider the price of lighting from the perspective of human labour. Prior to the Neolithic revolution, which put an end to our nomadic past and turned our species into agriculturalists, it took more than 50 hours of labor (mostly gathering wood) to “buy” 1,000 lumen hours of light. By 1800, it took about 5.4 hours. By 1900, it took 0.22 hours. By 1992, 1,000 lumen hours required 0.00012 hours of human labor.

Put differently, technological change, which is not fully captured in GDP figures, makes us underappreciate the tremendous advance in standards of living over that of our ancestors. Can that advance be sustained and, even, improved upon? That's where Romer enters the picture.

[Read More at CAPX News](#)



STUDENTS REACH BEYOND THEIR INSTITUTIONS TO SPREAD EDUCATION AROUND THE GLOBE



Credit: David Zakus

Arron serves as Executive Director for Students Offering Support (SOS), a student powered organization that works to create accessible, holistic and inspiring learning environments to help students realize their full potential as community leaders, innovators and thought leaders. Started at Wilfrid Laurier University, Ontario in 2004, SOS began as a registered student club that offered peer tutoring support. But quickly, the group began applying the philosophy of “students helping students” on a global scale, raising funds through its on-campus sessions to support third-party organizations focused on international access to education.

Today, SOS is a registered Canadian charity that issues grants and recruits an incredible 1,000+ student volunteers every year. “We believe, at their core, universities are about advancing education,” says Arron. “But what of the general trends and attitudes that Canada brings to global development work? With nationalism and isolationism emerging around the Western world, and with governments focusing more on initiatives driven by innovation and national economic self-interest, do people still care about global development work the way they might have in previous decades?”

[Read More at Academica Forum](#)



Watching Village Theatre on Malaria
Lusaka B, Nampula
Northern Mozambique
October 25, 2018



Credit: David Zakus

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Social Media: Evans Oppong

