

Climate change and its impact on mental health

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Introduction

- The research on mental health impacts from climate change has not been given priority and the evidence base is limited
- The climate change related mental health outcomes are mainly direct effects from extreme events such as heatwaves, drought, wildfires, floods, and storms or indirectly related to rising temperatures and sea levels

Mental health impacts

- Climate change is related to both acute and chronic impacts covering a range from light to very severe conditions
- Risks increase from heat and extreme events such as floods and drought
- The perception of a slow, gradual impact by climate change on human and ecological systems have a negative impact on mental health and inner well-being

Vulnerabilities

- Global climate change affects all, but some disproportionately, it acts as a health risk amplifier and reinforce inequalities and compound existing social injustices
- Elderly, children, pregnant women, people with pre-existing medical conditions including patients under mental treatment, people with substance abuse problems, indigenous people and other populations that depend on nature for their livelihood are examples of vulnerable populations
- The nature and extent also depends on the sensitivity, capacity and ability of people and societies exposed

Conclusions

- Climate change will create new mental health risks and enhance existing
- Introduce monitoring and surveillance systems to evaluate mental health effects from heat waves and extreme weather events
- Include mental health distress in health vulnerability and adaptation assessments to identify and better protect populations at risk
- Develop and introduce climate change response plans including mental health programmes for increased psychological and community resilience
- Mental health impacts needs greater attention in policy, practice and research

Thank you for your attention!