



Planetary Health
for Primary Care

Planetary Health for Primary Care was authored by Family Physician **Dr. Ilona Hale** and proudly supported by East Kootenay Division of Family Practice Project Lead **Lisa Larkin**, RN, and CASCADES Canada, a Government of Canada initiative.

Prior to writing the resource, a working group on Planetary Health in Primary Care was engaged to determine content inclusion, design, and usability. A multi-disciplinary review was conducted in two rounds by healthcare professionals from across Canada along with input from patient partners.

The resource offers tools, tips, and perspectives on how primary care providers can pursue low carbon, high-quality healthcare that heals the planet, supports patients, and reduces workload.

“Planetary Health for Primary Care outlines different strategies that address the bigger impacts of healthcare—such as the upstream waste generated in the supply chain to produce materials required for medications, lab tests, surgeries, and hospitalizations—and offers tangible actions to decrease it, such as reducing unnecessary care, empowering patients, and shifting to prevention. Low-carbon, high-quality care is a win-win-win: it improves patient care, reduces our environmental impact, reduces our workload, saves money in the system, and increases equity,” said Dr. Hale.



Dr. Ilona Hale

Principals of Sustainable Healthcare



Planetary healthcare presents an opportunity to continue providing high quality care for patients today without compromising the health of future generations. It increases equity, reduces costs and can relieve burdens on patients and healthcare workers. This primer is designed around the four principles of environmentally sustainable healthcare: Reducing unnecessary care, empowering patients, shifting our focus towards health promotion and prevention, and choosing lower impact alternatives

Environmental action in healthcare is becoming an increasingly important topic, and there is strong potential that sustainability will soon become embedded as a necessary component of value in our healthcare system.

DID YOU KNOW? The healthcare sector is one of the most polluting sectors, contributing 5% of Canada's total greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions.

Project Summary & Importance

The traditional day-to-day activities of primary care providers (e.g., prescriptions, diagnostic testing) can contribute significantly to healthcare's environmental footprint. The Planetary Health for Primary Care Resource supports providers to reduce their impact by offering strategies for high quality primary care and allowing patients to avoid more intensive (and environmentally impactful) secondary or tertiary interventions.

Collaboration & Engagements

14 regional, provincial, and national organizations were engaged in planning, working group participation, resource development, and information sharing. Collaboration continues as the project aims to reach national and global audiences.

Presentations Offered

To spread information about Planetary Health in Primary Care, 10 presentations were offered between September 2022 and June 2023. These presentations were used to spread information and introduce the resource prior to its official launch, reaching over 380 individuals from multiple disciplines.

Disciplines Engaged

Eight health disciplines were engaged through presentations and collaboration including Medical Office Assistants, Family Physicians, Specialists, Nurses, Pharmacists, Healthcare Administrators, Quality Improvement Specialists, and Educators.

Next Steps

The project continues to engage healthcare professionals and organizations in collaboration with Cascades Canada to spread information both provincially, and nationally and create sustainable change within the healthcare system.

"It's a very strong and timely document; it challenges much outmoded thinking about what we clinicians do now, and lays out a clear path for us to play our part in addressing the climate crisis."

- Dr. Warren Bell, Past Founding President of Canadian Association of Physicians for the Environment (CAPE)



The Planetary Health for Primary Care resource can be accessed on the [Cascades Canada website](#) or by healthcare providers on [Pathways](#).

pathwaysbc.ca/content_items/7147