

Canadian Society of Nephrology urges action on Climate Change

Ottawa, Ont. (July 15, 2022) – The Canadian Society of Nephrology (CSN) is calling on kidney health professionals, industry and governments to:

- a) curb anthropogenic greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions that lead to climate change and
- b) address the impact of climate change on people living with kidney disease who are uniquely vulnerable to its effects

Climate health impacts kidney health. Recurrent or severe volume depletion arising from higher temperatures can cause acute and chronic kidney diseases and worsen stone disease. Severe weather, including extreme heat events, fires, and floods, are increasing in frequency and severity with rising temperatures and threaten access to care. Kidney failure disproportionately impacts quality of life, socioeconomic determinants of health, burden of healthcare utilization and healthcare costs. These inequities are disproportionately and unfairly borne by vulnerable populations both around the world and within Canada who are most susceptible to the impacts of climate change.

Treatment of end-stage kidney disease in turn contributes negatively to the cycle of increasing emissions and global heating, given the disproportionately large GHG emissions from our therapies. Specifically, in the United Kingdom, emissions from in-centre dialysis care were shown to double a person's carbon footprint, and exceeded seven times the mean per patient carbon footprint.

The Canadian Society of Nephrology pledges our responsibility in this new era, as the first national nephrology society to sign the Sao Paulo Declaration on Planetary Health. Our commitment is embodied in the work of our Sustainable Nephrology Action Planning committee, which has created a framework for a novel planetary health approach to kidney care that is congruent with Canada's signing of the COP26 Health Programme.

We believe there is hope. Together, we can work to promote health, adopt and enjoy low carbon lifestyles, and renew our relationships with Earth's natural systems. We can reduce the carbon footprint of kidney care by thoughtful pursuits to reduce the burden of kidney disease through prevention and optimizing kidney transplantation. We can improve our systems that provide care, including dialysis, adding operational efficiencies and improved technologies whilst protecting care delivery systems from climate change associated threats. Reducing the carbon footprint of dialysis care must involve societal level changes, including reducing emissions from transportation of patients and goods, improving infrastructure towards reduced energy, water, and plastics consumption, recycling where possible, and powering our many facilities with renewable energy.

This essential work will involve many disciplines and will require support and partnerships with health leaders, ministries, industry, and the research community. Most importantly, we will need to work with our patient partners and renal care teams to effect change. In so doing, we hope to improve patients' lives, improve the financial sustainability of our care systems, reduce nephrology's contribution to climate change, and make our care delivery more resilient to the effects of our changing climate.