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Seven pharma CEOs announce new joint action to lower carbon emissions

By STAFF

CEOs from seven pharmaceutical companies announced their plan to reduce carbon emissions and eventually reach net zero.

The leaders, from AstraZeneca, GSK, Merck KGaA, Novo Nordisk, Roche, Samsung Biologics and Sanofi, came together through a public-private partnership called the Sustainable Markets Initiative Health Systems Task Force. It was launched at COP26, the UN Climate Change Conference last year.

“Climate change is the greatest global health threat of our time,” Pascal Soriot, chief executive officer of AstraZeneca and Champion of the SMI Health Systems Task Force, said in a press release. “During the pandemic, the healthcare sector stepped up and showed what can be achieved when we work together. Today, we act with the same urgency to tackle the climate crisis, with the collective commitments announced by the Sustainable Markets Initiative Health Systems Task Force setting a benchmark for others to drive action.”

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The task force has committed to reducing emissions across supply chains, patient care pathways and clinical trials. To reduce the emissions from patient care—which make up 45% of emissions from healthcare—members will switch to renewable power, explore green heat solutions by 2025, explore green transportation corridors by 2025, and transition to zero-emission vehicles by 2030.

As well, the task force will raise awareness about the need to decarbonize care pathways, create an end-to-end pathway emissions standard for specific diseases, and increase emissions transparency by creating a common framework for life-cycle assessments of products.

The most important area to decarbonize is clinical trials, which includes agreeing to a common framework by 2023, and then reporting on greenhouse gas emissions from phase 2 and 3 clinical trials by 2025. In addition, they will set emissions reduction targets for trials by 2030, at the latest; provide incentives to clinical research organizations and their suppliers to reduce emissions; and ask more than 90% of trials from 2025 onwards to review how digital solutions might be able to reduce emissions.

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The details of these commitments are outlined in four [white papers](#) created by the task force.

They will also partner with the World Health Organization's Alliance for Transformative Action on Climate and Health. Health systems are responsible for 4% to 5% of total global net emissions, while also being impacted by the climate crisis' many repercussions, including a rise in air pollution, extreme heat events, malnutrition and mental health issues.

“The case for decarbonizing our health systems is clear, and failing to keep the 1.5°C goal alive will have irreversible impacts on global health,” Dr Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus, Director-General of the World Health Organization, said. “Transitioning to low-carbon, climate-resilient health systems is essential for every country's journey towards universal health coverage. The commitments announced today demonstrate the power of public-private partnership to achieve positive and sustainable change for the health of people and the planet.”