



Planetary Health Subcommittee Quick Guide to a Greener Program

Introduction

The *Quick Guide to a Greener Program* has been created by the Planetary Health Subcommittee to support departments in integrating planetary health principles across all areas of postgraduate medical education.

This guide provides practical strategies and recommendations to make departmental activities more sustainable, minimize environmental impacts, and promote awareness of climate-related health issues.

These strategies aim to foster an educational environment where awareness of planetary health is intertwined with medical education, ultimately enhancing our commitment to sustainability and preparing our physicians to respond to the health challenges posed by climate change.

Curriculum

Have a Planetary Health Liaison for every department. This is someone who updates the program on new planetary health educational opportunities and other activities, and networks with the Planetary Health Lead/team.

Apply a Planetary Health lens to the whole curriculum. How is climate change affecting the most vulnerable groups, shifting disease patterns, and causing novel presentations? Feel free to include or adapt any of [these slides](#) in any relevant lectures.

Reducing unnecessary investigations, minimizing waste.

Encourage all lecturers to review Choosing Wisely principles in the material taught to residents, including considering the usefulness and planetary impact of lab tests, medication choices, and investigations.

Events

Limit the carbon footprint of catering choices

- Less/no beef (60kg CO₂e per 1kg beef vs 1.1kg CO₂e per 1kg lentils)
- Plant-heavy (at least 50-75% plant-based options, in accordance with Canada's food guide)

- No disposable cutlery – ask people to bring their own washable cutlery (plates, mugs)
- Compost receptacles available for food waste
- Donate suitable leftover food
- Local caterers, local food sources, seasonal offerings

Hold climate-forward social events, i.e./ limit plastic and overall wastefulness in chosen social activities and consider incorporating events like hikes, tree planting, seed or plant exchanges, local farm visits.

Examples: minimize waste wrappers when considering small treats for Halloween, Valentine's Day etc.

Encourage active transportation and bus travel/carpooling where possible.

Consider virtual events where appropriate and virtual may save significant travel distances.

Decisions

Have Planetary Health as a standing item on every Department meeting – and for every decision, consider the climate-impacts.

Think of climate implications in a similar way to budgetary considerations: everything has a cost, is there a way to minimize cost and is the cost worth the benefit of the decision?

Physical Space

Reduce departmental energy use where possible

- LED lights
- Smart climate and light systems
- Automatic power shut-offs when items not in use
- Window shades/insulation

Limit paper use by circulating things digitally, printing on both sides of paper, or recycling paper where possible. GOOS paper = 'good on one side'.

Promote compost through city compost collections, collecting compost from the building, and/or encouraging home compost.

Clinical encounters

- Encourage using treatments that align excellent patient care with planetary health principles
- Offering virtual care appointments where appropriate
- ParX Nature Prescriptions as part of lifestyle medicine
- Switching from metered-dose inhalers to PPIs
- Plant-rich eating
- Reducing unnecessary investigations and following minimum interval follow up testing recommendations
- Appropriate medication prescribing using shared decision making
- Appropriate medication deprescribing
- Encourage preventions like immunizations, evidence-based screening, exercise, sleep, and positive social engagement
- Use good hand hygiene and eliminate the use of unindicated gloves (or use wall gloves instead of sterile gloves where appropriate)

Research

Encourage resident research projects on planetary health themes. Pair interested residents with supervisors with expertise, within the program or through [Trash-Can.org](https://trash-can.org).

Advocacy

Encourage learners to engage in environmental advocacy at the micro, meso and macro level.

- Micro: personal choices, planetary health mindfulness
- Meso: influencing others, discussing in local groups
- Macro: encouraging and taking actions that affect large numbers of people