

# POLICY FORUM

## *Where There is No Debate*

### Introduction

This issue of the *North Carolina Medical Journal* is not dedicated to convincing the reader of the causes of climate change. We cite the data, the facts, the trends, and the science and move on. We bring the effects of climate change home—to our home, North Carolina—telling who is being affected even now, and who will be affected most and where.

We describe what is visible to the layperson's eye and what brings fear to the broad community of professionals in public, social, and health policy, as well as ground-level health professionals.

We recall the devastation and still-in-progress recovery from hurricanes, coastal flooding, and extreme heat events; the effect on thousands of lives; the interruption of the food chain; the loss of safe drinking water; the interruption of electric power; the closure of an interstate highway; the loss of life; and the billions of dollars invested to slowly bring back some sense of normalcy years after. When severe weather becomes the norm, we are experiencing climate change.

In this issue, we ask, "Are we prepared for increased waterborne and vector-borne illness from flooding and seawater rise; cardiovascular and respiratory illness increases from degraded air quality; the nutritional impact of crop and livestock loss; and the emotional and mental stress that accompanies these forces of nature?"

Our authors offer analysis and warnings, but hope as well, with suggestions of what we in the field of health can do now to prevent, mitigate, and prepare for a changing climate. NCMJ

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