

# A healthy future for children and adolescents

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We would like to congratulate *The Lancet* and authors for the new flagship Series on Optimising Child and Adolescent Health and Development(1); a vital initiative. However, while the Series prominently includes social determinants of health and refers to social support, the lack of emphasis on environmental determinants of child health is a critical omission, especially in the context of the looming threat of climate breakdown.

We believe it is long overdue that our, increasingly toxic, environments were brought into the heart of global child health discussions; prominently including them in series like this ought to be second nature. The rationale for this is twofold. Firstly, environmental determinants of child health are vast and growing. Secondly, mainstreaming concerns for the environment into policy, practice and advocacy can improve individual, population and even planetary health, especially for children/adolescents.

WHO estimates that 1 in 4 child deaths could be prevented through reductions in environmental risks from conception to adolescence and beyond(2). This includes hundreds of thousands of annual deaths from respiratory infections, diarrhoea and neonatal causes, and impacts on child development associated with pollution in air, soil, food and water; pollution which children are especially vulnerable to, and which are growing. This is even before the emergent, multi-dimensional and potentially catastrophic threats of climate breakdown to physical and mental health are considered(3).

We believe it is overdue that the global child health community listened to young people themselves and made these issues central to their work(4). This includes in clinical practice, for example strategies to reduce exposure to air pollution amongst children with asthma. Environmental determinants are increasingly relevant to (child) health policy too, and ought to be considered with social determinants in a truly child-centred approach. Finally, advocacy is critical; put simply, child health professionals should, working with young people themselves, lend their influential voices to advocate for a reversal of environmental degradation and climate breakdown; now more than ever. Only though all of this will the considerable 'win-wins' for child and planetary health be realised(5).

That this flagship series makes only passing reference to the role of environments, including the inequitable risks posed by pollution and climate change to the next generation, is a major omission that this deserves examination and should be avoided in future. After all, if these influential series are to be truly agenda-setting, it is critical that they set us on the correct agenda.

Your sincerely,

Robert C Hughes, Martin Antonio, Rhiannon Osborne, Susanna Mayhew, Andy Haines

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