

2022

PLANETARY HEALTH, NCDs, AND IMPLEMENTATION

Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases mid-year workshop summary



An output from the Global
Alliance for Chronic Diseases
Research Network and partners

GLOBAL ALLIANCE FOR CHRONIC DISEASES

Mid-year workshop

WORKSHOP SUMMARY

Planetary health, NCDs, and implementation

Suggested citations

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Guinto R (2022) Systems thinking, NCDs, and the climate emergency [PowerPoint slides]. Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases. Available via www.gacd.org. Accessed [add date].

Important note: the written summary was developed by the GACD team and is intended as a general overview of Dr Guinto's presentation. Please see Dr Guinto's PowerPoint slides for references for all original data shared as part of his presentation.

If you wish to cite the material on pages 7 to 8, please use the following citation:

Redvers N (2022) Integrating Indigenous knowledges into planetary health policy and practice [PowerPoint slides]. Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases. Available via www.gacd.org. Accessed [add date].

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Why planetary health?

An estimated 13 million people each year die from avoidable causes related to the environment – and this number is projected to grow unless we can tackle climate change and planetary health.

[The Lancet](#) describes public health as having “an important role in securing a sustainable future.” Active transport interventions, it says, can increase physical activity levels and mental wellness, while also reducing air pollution, energy consumption, and greenhouse gas emissions. In addition, helping food producers and consumers to transition towards more sustainable diets can reduce risks of cardiovascular disease and unhealthy weight, while lessening land and water use, and greenhouse gas emissions.

Planetary health is a solutions-oriented, transdisciplinary field and social movement focused on analyzing and addressing the impacts of human disruptions to Earth’s natural systems on human health and all life on Earth.

(Planetary Health Alliance)

Implementation science has a critical role in bridging the gap between knowledge and action across many disciplines. As the world collectively faces the climate emergency, using implementation science to implement evidence-based policies and interventions effectively and efficiently is more important than ever.

The theme of individual and/or structural level interventions that can reduce NCD risk and/or maximise the health-promoting potential of cities, informal settlements, and periurban communities is central to the Eighth GACD funding call, scheduled to launch on 30 November 2022.

The GACD workshop on **Planetary health, NCDs, and implementation** delved into the synergies between climate change, the environment, and NCDs; highlighted the rationale for the upcoming GACD grant call; and explored the role of implementation research in planetary health.

Keynote presentations

Renzo Guinto



Renzo Guinto MD, DrPH is the Chief Planetary Health Scientist of the [Sunway Centre for Planetary Health](#) in Malaysia. Concurrently, he is the Inaugural Director of the [Planetary and Global Health Program](#) of the St. Luke's Medical Center College of Medicine in the Philippines. He is also a member of the National Panel of Technical Experts of the Philippine Climate Change Commission and convener of [Planetary Health Philippines](#).

An Obama Foundation Asia-Pacific Leader and Aspen Institute New Voices Fellow, Renzo is a member of several international groups including: Lancet–Chatham House Commission on Improving Population Health post COVID-19 (University of Cambridge); Lancet One Health Commission (University of Oslo); Advisory Board of Climate Cares (Imperial College London); Global Advisory Council of Primary Care International; and Board of Trustees of the Philippine Society of Public Health Physicians. Renzo has served as consultant for various organizations including the WHO, WHO Foundation, World Bank, USAID, and Philippine Department of Health.

Renzo obtained his Doctorate of Public Health from Harvard University and Doctorate of Medicine from the University of the Philippines Manila. In 2020, Renzo was included by Tatler Magazine in its Gen.T List of 400 leaders of tomorrow who are shaping Asia's future.

Twitter: [@RenzoGuinto](#)

Presentation summary: Systems thinking, NCDs, and the climate emergency

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Planetary health is an ethos that acknowledges the inextricable link between the health of people and the health of the planet, and embraces a shift from an 'ego-logical' perspective that prioritises the needs and wants of humans to an 'eco-logical' view that recognises humans as part of a non-hierarchical web of interconnected species.

This non-hierarchical view extends to within the human species; taking a planetary health approach is also a social justice movement that acknowledges and addresses the fact that climate change unequally affects those living in the world's wealthiest and poorest countries. While North America, Europe, and China are responsible for most of the world's carbon emissions, countries in the Global South, particularly within Africa and Southeast Asia, are projected to suffer the most from environmental catastrophe.

There are numerous examples that demonstrate how environmental degradation accelerates the NCD pandemic, illustrating that when humans inflict harm upon our planet, they are also harming themselves. In some communities affected by rising sea levels, for instance, seawater introduces salt to fresh water sources. Growing evidence links the salinification of drinking water to hypertension and preeclampsia, as well as to miscarriage and maternal and neonatal death. Other examples include worsening air pollution, which causes poor cardiovascular and respiratory outcomes, and increasingly frequent and intense heat

waves that can trigger heart attacks as well as death from heat stroke. Climate change is also associated with poor mental health; experiencing a catastrophic weather event can cause post-traumatic stress disorder, and climate (or 'eco') anxiety is on the rise, especially in young people who are terrified of what the future holds.

Addressing the co-occurring crises of the NCD pandemic, climate change, and biodiversity collapse demands holistic, transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral collaboration that simultaneously reduces environmental impact while also improving health.

Addressing the co-occurring crises of the NCD pandemic, climate change, and biodiversity collapse demands holistic, transdisciplinary, cross-sectoral collaboration that simultaneously reduces environmental impact while also improving health. The effort to improve food systems exemplifies this: the agricultural sector and transportation sector must be engaged to reduce the environmental footprint of food production, decreasing carbon emissions associated with growing, packaging, and transporting food. In addition, the public health sector and urban planners can help lead efforts to improve access to healthy foods, reducing rates of malnutrition in all its forms.

Planetary health advocates must also work with politicians and economists to re-imagine existing systems that prioritise unlimited growth and treat the planet as if its resources were unlimited. We must flatten the curve of carbon emissions and reduce our environmental footprint so as not to exceed Earth's capacity. Only if we reject these old ways of doing things, and truly commit to 'building back better,' will we stabilise the climate and reap the health co-benefits, especially in the arena of NCD prevention and control.



Watch Dr Guinto's full keynote presentation and download his slide set [here](#).

Nicole Redvers



Dr Nicole Redvers, ND, MPH, is a member of the Deninu K'ue First Nation in Denendeh (NWT, Canada) and has worked with Indigenous patients, scholars, and communities around the globe her entire career. She is an assistant professor in the Department of Family and Community Medicine and the Department of Indigenous Health at the University of North Dakota where she helped developed and launch the first Indigenous health PhD program.

Dr Redvers is co-founder and current board chair of the Canadian charity the Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation based in Yellowknife, NWT, providing traditional Indigenous-rooted Land-based wellness supports to northerners. She has been actively involved at regional, national, and international levels promoting the inclusion of Indigenous perspectives in both human and planetary health research and practice. She is author of the trade paperback book titled, 'The Science of the Sacred: Bridging Global Indigenous Medicine Systems and Modern Scientific Principles'.

Twitter: [@DrNicoleRedvers](https://twitter.com/DrNicoleRedvers)

Presentation summary: Integrating Indigenous wisdom into planetary health policy and practice

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While 'planetary health' is a relatively new academic field, the worldview that promotes a non-hierarchical interconnectedness among all life is wisdom that is shared among many Indigenous Peoples globally. Addressing planetary health requires prioritising the needs of Mother Earth and considering how to keep her healthy. It also requires a rejection of Western ways of thinking about humans as separate from nature, and in its place recognising that humans are *of* nature, tied inextricably to the land through the water that we drink, the food that we eat, and the air that we breathe. Once humans are able to understand this, it becomes much more difficult to continue our assault on our environment, as this violence is no longer conceptualised as external and distant, but rather occurring upon our own bodies and being.

Indigenous Peoples are critical stewards of Mother Earth, comprising just 6% of the world's population but caring for 33% of the world's old growth forests and 80% of the planet's remaining biodiversity. Indigenous wellbeing and health is therefore a *determinant of planetary health*, as the health of Indigenous populations determines their ability to fulfil this vital role of caring for Mother Earth. There are numerous threats to the health of Indigenous communities (and thus to planetary health), with Indigenous populations demonstrating much higher rates of non-communicable diseases and other conditions compared to non-Indigenous groups. Climate change exacerbates these health inequities, as the impacts of climate change are already disproportionately affecting regions where Indigenous Peoples live, including the Arctic. Learnings that can help ameliorate the dual threats of poor health and climate catastrophe on Indigenous populations, and thus elevate the planetary health promoting power of these communities, include:

RECOGNITION THAT THE SET OF FACTORS THAT COMPRISE THE ‘SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH’ VARIES BETWEEN POPULATIONS.

It is often conceptualised that there are a common, standardised set of ‘social determinants of health’ - factors such as education, income level, and resources in the built environment that influence health-promoting/reducing behaviours; access to healthy foods and medical care; and our overall health outcomes and life expectancy. In truth, however, these ‘social determinants’ are not uniform; researchers and practitioners must work with communities to understand their unique social determinants. Indigenous communities, for example, have distinct proximal, intermediate, and distal social determinants of health, which include environmental stewardship, cultural continuity, colonialism, racism and social exclusion, and self-determination. The failure to identify and address the unique sources of ill health in these communities perpetuates health inequities, and explains why so many public health interventions targeting Indigenous and other marginalised communities are unsuccessful.

COLLABORATION WITH ELDERS AND OTHER COMMUNITY MEMBERS IS CRITICAL TO THE SUCCESSFUL DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF PUBLIC HEALTH INTERVENTIONS IN INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.

Working with Indigenous Elders, the key knowledge keepers of the community, is critical to developing Interventions that embrace Indigenous ways of knowing and doing. Researchers should not enter communities with a defined research agenda but should instead engage in genuine co-design with Elders and other community members before, during, and in the data interpretation stages of the project.

LAND-BASED HEALING CAN BE A CRITICALLY IMPORTANT REJUVENATION PROCESS FOR INDIGENOUS COMMUNITIES.

Land-based healing is a process in which Indigenous Peoples “re-learn, revitalise, and reclaim” their traditional wellness practices by reconnecting with the land that is foundational to their identity. Land-based healing for Indigenous Peoples is complicated by historical and ongoing land-grabbing and forced relocation through generations of colonisation and forced migration. In Indigenous healing processes, the land itself is understood to be an active participant.












More equitable human health and healing for the planet we inhabit can only be achieved if we adopt a worldview that is different from the one that introduced the current systems of inequity and environmental destruction. Collaboration with Indigenous communities can provide an integral perspective that improves planetary health and promotes health and healing within these communities and is vital for the survival of their wisdom.

To quote Dr Redvers, “Indigenous voices are a powerful and beneficial solutions-orientated force for mother earth’s wellbeing and for all living beings that inhabit her. We therefore call for an inclusion of wisdom that is not mere knowledge or information but is an insight that comes from the heart – from the heart of mother earth.”



Watch Dr Redvers’ full keynote presentation and download her slide set [here](#).

Supplementary reading

-  [No public health without planetary health](#) (The Lancet Public Health)
-  [Planetary health: protecting human health on a rapidly changing planet](#) (The Lancet)
-  [The global syndemic of obesity, undernutrition, and climate change: *The Lancet* Commission report](#) (The Lancet)
-  [Health and climate change: policy response to protect and public health](#) (The Lancet)
-  [Integrating planetary health into clinical guidelines to sustainably transform health care](#) (The Lancet Planetary Health)
-  [The determinants of planetary health: an Indigenous consensus perspective](#) (The Lancet Planetary Health)
-  [Addressing challenges to human health in the Anthropocene epoch—an overview of the findings of the Rockefeller/Lancet Commission on Planetary Health](#) (The Lancet)
-  [Sustaining planetary health through systems thinking: Public health's critical role](#) (ScienceDirect)
-  [The Good Ancestor: How to think long-term in a short-term world](#) (WH Allen)
-  [The impact of climate change on mental health and emotional wellbeing: current evidence and implications for policy and practice](#) (Grantham Institute)
-  [Our climate, our health: NCDs & climate change shared opportunities for action](#) (NCD Alliance)

Future GACD funding opportunities



Information on upcoming GACD funding calls [here](#).

Access the GACD find-a-collaborator tool [here](#).

Access the GACD Stakeholder engagement resource collection [here](#).



About the Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases

Who we are

The Global Alliance for Chronic Diseases (GACD) is the first collaboration of major research funding agencies to specifically address chronic, non-communicable diseases. Together, the members of the alliance represent 80% of global public funding for health research.

Our focus

Implementation science | Non-communicable diseases | Low- and middle-income countries and vulnerable populations in high-income countries

“Implementation science examines what works, for whom and under what circumstances, and how interventions can be adapted and scaled up in ways that are accessible and equitable.”

~ GACD Strategy Board

Our mission

To reduce the burden of chronic non communicable diseases (NCDs) in low-and middle-income countries, and in Indigenous and other populations facing conditions of vulnerability in high-income countries, by building evidence to inform national and international NCD policies and contribute to the achievement of the Sustainable Development Goals.

Our strategic objectives

- Investing in impactful implementation science research.
- Building implementation science capacity and capability in relation to NCDs.
- Facilitating collaborations and partnerships to support GACD impact.

Connect with us

Website: gacd.org/

Twitter: [@gacd_media](https://twitter.com/gacd_media)

Email: admin@gacd.org

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