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ENGAGING HEALTHCARE PROVIDERS AND PATIENTS ON CLIMATE ACTION THROUGH PHYSICAL, EMOTIONAL AND SOCIAL WELLNESS

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According to the World Health Organization, the health challenges from climate change are many and varied including: Malnutrition due to lack of quality food access. Mental health challenges in addition to severe socioeconomic challenges, through the loss of homes, jobs and needed social connections due to extreme events. Acute illness and the risk of water-borne diseases associated with lack of access to clean water. The increased risk of vector-borne diseases with warmer temperatures. Chronic illnesses associated with heat stress and pollution. Death from cardiovascular and respiratory disease, particularly among vulnerable people as temperatures rise to extreme levels.

Both healthcare providers and patients must be engaged on climate change and action. While several medical training institutions are exploring opportunities to embed climate change and health education into their curricula, of importance are the holistic strategies to engage patients on climate action. The challenges are complex, and the data is overwhelming. Patients may not fully comprehend the personal implications of climate change and as citizens, may not understand their role in climate action.

We suggest through the creation of a sustainable living mindset based on wellness, it is possible for healthcare providers to create a personal and emotional connection to climate action. The results from workshops with older adults are shared in this paper, demonstrating how the link to physical, emotional and social wellness, can encourage behavior change with respect to dietary and consumption practices as well as increased connection to and protection of greenspaces for health and well-being. ■