

Climate Conversations

Leading the Way in a Changing Climate

By Laurie Laugeman BSN, RN, HNB-BC, HWNC-BC

We celebrated Nurses Week this past May with the theme “The Power of Nurses,” highlighting the essential role nurses play in healthcare, our expertise, leadership, and impact on patients, communities, health systems, and our planet. We need to carry this theme throughout the year and into the years ahead, especially as we turn our attention to planetary health. With rising energy costs and increasing climate-related health burdens, it is time to accelerate our transition to clean energy and move away from fossil fuels.

Climate change affects the patients we care for every day. Older adults with COPD or heart conditions experience worsening symptoms due to air pollution and rising temperatures. Children are exposed to diesel exhaust from the school buses they ride. The impacts of climate change do not affect everyone equally; systemic vulnerabilities and limited access to resources place certain communities at greater risk.

Nurses are already addressing the health problems and lifestyle changes in our work environments and local communities

as a result of climate change. We must use our power as nurses to educate ourselves and others about the health impacts of fossil fuels. Our world is experiencing a global climate crisis, and nurses today have the power to be visionaries, pioneers, humanitarians, and compassionate leaders, just as Florence Nightingale was. By grounding our actions in evidence-based practice, we can use our collective influence to protect the health of our planet and create the changes we want to see.

According to NANDA-I nurses must name what needs to be addressed. A climate change task force was established to review scientific literature on the health impacts of climate change and to guide nurses in recognizing and responding to these developing needs. For over a year, the task force conducted the analysis and suggest that nursing diagnoses reflect environmental and climate-related health issues.

Adding climate-related nursing diagnoses can assist nurses in developing preventive care plans. Identifying related risk factors, such as extreme heat and pollution. This enables nurses to provide education on cooling strategies, the necessity of hydration, and monitoring air quality. Identifying nursing diagnoses related to climate change can also empower nurses as advocates supporting urban green spaces, planting trees, and protecting land, air, and water.

The NANDA-I task force is only in the beginning stages, with more steps to be developed related to specific diagnosis, interventions and outcomes. NANDA-I leadership can provide standardization of the language used in nursing diagnoses and guidance on how to address climate-health challenges. By becoming visionaries and harnessing the power of nurses, our profession can lead the way and be at the forefront of present and future nursing challenges. ■

References

- Moreira, R. P., Cavalcante, T. F., Saturnino, A. S., Costa, A. C., & Herdman, T. H. (2026). From climate change to nursing diagnosis: Nurses' response to the global climate crisis [Letter to the editor]. *International Journal of Knowledge*
- Dossey, B. M., & Keegan, L. (Eds.). (2016). *Holistic nursing: A handbook for practice* (6th ed.; Associate Editors: C. C. Barrere & M. B. Helming). Jones & Bartlett Learning.

Introducing a Podcast that Amplifies the Voice of Nurses!

Write, Submit, Succeed

is a conversational podcast that helps nurses transform clinical expertise into published work.



WE'RE HERE TO
DEMISTIFY THE JOURNEY

Podcast Hosts & Editorial Directors of
American Nurse Journal



Julie Nyhus
MSN, FNP-BC, APRN



Cheryl L. Mee
MSN, MBA, RN, FAAN



Produced by: **AMERICAN NURSE**

MYAMERICANNURSE.COM/WRITE