

LETTER TO EDITOR

Irked of Searing Climate Change and Prevailing Fragility in Pakistan

Aamir Hussain

To,
The editor,

The chronicle of climate change has been going on for a number of decades with the industrialization boom. Evidence based studies of WHO (World Health Organization) from 1970 to 2004 have showed that mortality due to temperature only, was approximately 160,000 deaths/ year worldwide. According to the CDC (Center of Disease Control and Prevention), in USA almost 9000 deaths had occurred due to extreme heat from 1980 to 2002. Nearly, 20 major heat waves had been observed from 1980 to 2000 in India. In the year of 1998, about 1,800 deaths were reported in India and only 1,300 deaths due to heat waves were claimed¹ by the Government of Pakistan, in June, 2015. However the data is lacking especially in the subcontinent regarding the heat stroke mortality. Unofficial reports had expressed that actual numbers are far more than the claimed figure. According to a research, Pakistan's proclivity to climate change not merely depends on environmental situation but further significantly on the socio-economic circumstances and adaptive ability of the inhabitants.² Core body temperature is strikingly elevated in heat stroke (also termed as hyperthermia or heat stroke) usually above 40 °C (104 °F), in the presence of some neurologic symptoms like drowsiness, dizziness and disorientation. Heat stroke's morbidity and mortality affects mostly elderly, pregnant women, infants, younger children, urban poor, outdoor workers, malnourished, pilgrims of Mecca, holders of fasting in Ramadan, etc. Moreover animals and birds are ignored population at risk in searing surge of heat. Fortunately enough it's preventable in nature. Rapid identification and prompt aggressive cooling is the mainstay. Frequent water drinking, working in shades, ORS consumption, light colored loose dressings and proper ventilation could prevent from heat stroke.³

Unfortunately, previously the global mood on climate change was in the trash can. There has been disagreement among the scientific community whether it is human-

induced or natural phenomenon. In 2007, the Fourth Assessment Report of the IPCC (Inter governmental Panel on Climate Change), has categorically declared that probability of this being caused by natural climatic processes is less than 5% and the probability that this is caused by human emissions of greenhouse gases is over 90%. So, it is real and also in the hands of human beings.⁴ It is producing some really dangerous effects and outcomes for third world countries like Pakistan. Last heat stroke disaster touched Karachi, which is one of the biggest, busiest, metropolitan cities of Pakistan. Now what are the opinions and options for stake holders in Pakistan, to prevent morbidities and mortalities due to heat surge, in coming summer season of 2016, which also include the religious, rigorous festival that is Ramadan.⁵ The government of Pakistan with the global collaboration should strengthen its social and economic indicators in the attempt to reduce potential severe effects of climate change. Moreover, there is a need for all countries to move towards low carbon economies. Finally, workshops, advertisements on mass media and other awareness programs to encounter potential heat stroke hazards should be implemented.

REFERENCES:

1. Online available at: <http://www.cdc.gov/climateandhealth/effects/default.htm>, accessed on 5th April, 2016, at 5pm
2. Online available at: <http://epaper.dawn.com/Detail News.php? Story Text=19-04-2016-004-005>, accessed on 4th April, 2016, at 10 am.
3. Online available at: <http://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC3477077/>, accessed on 3rd March, 2016, at 10 pm.
4. World Health Organization (WHO) Climate Change and Health. Report by the Secretariat, World Health Organization: EB 124/11; 2008.
5. Abstracts from the 38th Annual Meeting of the Society of General Internal Medicine. Journal of General Internal Medicine 2015;30(2):545-51.



✉ **Dr. Aamir Hussain**
Senior Lecturer (LIII)
Department of Community Medicine
Liaquat National Hospital and Medical College
Karachi.
Email: dr.aamirhussain786@gmail.com
Received: 14-05-2016
Revised: 16-05-2016
Accepted: 17-05-2016