Health Care Sustainability, Climate Resilience, and Cost Savings

The Medical Society Consortium on CLIMATE & HEALTH

Climate Change is a Global Health Threat and a Public Health Crisis

- In 2021, over 200 medical journals called climate change "**the greatest threat to global public health.**"[1]

The Health Sector is Major Contributor

- The US health care sector accounts for **8.5% of domestic greenhouse gas pollution.**[2]
- **Hospital care is the largest contributor** (36%) to the health sector's pollution.[3]

Countering the Myth "It's Too Expensive"

- Many assume sustainability is too costly, but **research shows hospitals can actually save money.**

  ↳ Sustainability activities at hospital systems nationwide could lead to cost savings exceeding **$5.4 billion over five years** and **$15 billion over 10 years.**[4]

Cost Savings

WASTE REDUCTION

Inova Fairfax Hospital in Falls Church, VA assessed and reduced their regulated medical waste with a team including employees. The team was able to **decrease red bag waste by 14%** (a 1,000,000 pound reduction), **save over $200,000** in waste removal fees, and increase employee engagement.[5]

Gunderson Health System in La Crosse, WI achieved a 50% food waste reduction and savings of $25,000 per year with a tracking system that helped them implement strategies to reduce food waste.[10]

PLANT-FORWARD FOOD

After implementing a plant-based food program in 2022, NYC Health + Hospitals saved 59 cents per meal (~ **$500,000 annually**), with **90% patient satisfaction.**[6]

SURGICAL TRAY OPTIMIZATION

A large academic medical center coordinated surgical tray optimization across its five surgery sections, estimating cost savings from **$53,193 to $531,929.**[8]

ANESTHETIC GASES

Seattle Children's Hospital has removed desflurane unless requested, lowered N2O flows, and used IV anesthesia when appropriate. This saved the hospital more than **$175,000 per year** and reduced their emissions from anesthetic gases by 87%.[7]

ENERGY USE REDUCTION

Cleveland Clinic has saved **$2.5 million per year** by switching all light bulbs from fluorescents to LEDs, **recouping investment costs in just four years.** They saved another **$2 million per year** by eliminating unneeded air flow exchanges in operating rooms with HVAC setbacks.[9]

1. https://tinyurl.com/r54arhec
2. https://tinyurl.com/4awveckw
3. https://tinyurl.com/5f4f7wdw
4. https://tinyurl.com/mr23emec
5. https://tinyurl.com/3nfvsxex
6. https://tinyurl.com/56ccfz4d
7. https://tinyurl.com/4mxpvuhf
8. https://tinyurl.com/yv5kx5sf
9. https://tinyurl.com/47m2u8wa
10. https://tinyurl.com/2bz4hbs9

Disaster Preparedness and Resilience

Hospital damages from extreme weather events can range from **$600,000 to $2 billion per facility**.[11]

The World Health Organization estimates that the price for retrofitting non-structural items can cost as little as **1% of the value of a hospital, while possibly protecting up to 90% of the hospital's assets.**[12]

Staff Recruitment and Retention

A recent survey found:

- **4 out of 5 clinicians** reported that it is important to them for their hospital to **address climate change**. Responses were similar by geographic region, gender, age, provider type, and organizational tenure.[13]

- **3 out of 4 clinicians** reported they found it important to address climate change and minimize the environmental impact of their work. [13]

Environmental Justice

Reducing waste reduces the need for incineration, which creates toxic pollutants that negatively affect health, and disproportionately affects communities of color.

According to the Tishman Environment and Design Center at the New School, **85% of waste incinerators in the United States are located in environmental justice (EJ) communities**. [14]

Inflation Reduction Act (IRA) Cash Pay

Due to new provisions in the IRA, both for-profit and non-profit facilities can access significant Federal tax credits from now through 2033 for purchasing equipment that reduces greenhouse gas emissions. Tax-exempt entities **receive the credits as "direct pay" (i.e., in cash)**.[15]

AdventHealth, a large non-profit hospital system, is installing a 3MW solar array and 31 dual EV chargers, for which it will receive **$3.5-$4 million** back in direct pay tax credits.[16]

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medsocietiesforclimatehealth.org

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noharm.org practicegreenhealth.org

11. https://tinyurl.com/2y5bxdmb
12. https://tinyurl.com/38ex9y4c
13. https://tinyurl.com/52jmrn6k
14. https://tinyurl.com/bdh258ab
15. https://www.whitehouse.gov/cleanenergy/directpay/
16. https://tinyurl.com/hjh455e8