

## Climate change affecting incidence of infectious diseases

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**Editor's note:** *The 2018 AAP National Conference & Exhibition will take place from Nov. 2-6 in Orlando.*

Susan E. Pacheco, M.D., FAAP, will present "Climate Change and Infectious Disease: Current and Expected Effects and Strategies (F1052)" from 9:30-10:15 a.m. Saturday, Nov. 3 in room W311EF of the convention center.

Dr. Pacheco is a member of the AAP Council on Environmental Health Executive Committee and associate professor of pediatrics at University of Texas Health Science Center.

**Q: What are the key things you will be discussing during the session?**

A: This session will describe the ongoing and future changes in infectious diseases resulting from climate change in the United States and globally. The resulting increase in global temperatures, extreme weather events and variable precipitation patterns resulting from climate change will alter the incidence and the distribution of climate-sensitive infections such as foodborne, waterborne and vector-borne conditions.

We are already witnessing how the geographic and seasonal distribution of vector-borne diseases, including Lyme disease, malaria and dengue fever, continue to expand and how higher sea water temperature has allowed an unexpected northward spread of the oyster-associated *V. parahaemolyticus* disease.

**Q: Why is it important for pediatricians to learn more about this issue?**

A: Pediatricians must be knowledgeable of climate-sensitive infectious diseases, how these diseases will change and how they will affect their patient population. These "unusual" infections and their presentation must be considered in the evaluation of a pediatric patient presenting at the office, even if there is not a clear-cut exposure. This knowledge will provide a foundation to foster protective measures for children and their families and promote public health interventions for the protection of vulnerable individuals and, when applicable, infection control.

**Q: What is the session's take-home message?**

A: Climate change is already affecting the incidence, geographic and seasonal distribution of these diseases in the U.S. and globally. As pediatricians, we must be cognizant of their occurrence and presentation to diagnose and treat children and to educate their families about their presence and ways to decrease potential exposures.

**Q: How did you get interested in this topic?**

In 2006, I helped my children with a project about climate change. I have to admit that I had never been interested or knowledgeable about the subject. What I learned while I helped them was a life-changing experience. I could not understand how, as a pediatrician and patient advocate, I had never paid attention to what the changing climate was doing to the earth our children will inherit from us. I remember the thirst I felt for learning more. I remember restless nights where I could barely sleep as I learned about how climate change was affecting and would continue to affect our children's health.

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