



World Hospital Congress Side event: Global Green and Healthy Health Systems

Press Briefing Paper

Background to the World Health Congress

The International Hospital Federation's (IHF) 40th World Hospital Congress (WHC) kicks off in Durban, South Africa from the 31st of October to the 3rd of November. Taking place at the Durban International Convention Centre, it is the first time this event will be taking place on the African continent. The WHC will be attended by participants reflective of the IHF's membership, a globally representative group which includes members from Kenya, Spain, Philippines, Hong Kong, Nigeria and many more. The IHF members will gather to discuss the congress theme of "Addressing the Challenge of Patient-centred Care and Safety".

Founded in 1929 and based in Geneva, Switzerland; the IHF's aim is to create a space where member institutions such as hospitals and various other healthcare organizations can share knowledge and best practice examples. The IHF promotes and facilitates knowledge sharing by creating global forums and knowledge hubs for member institutions. They offer policy guidance and encourage the sharing of strategic information on health sector management in order to create better, safer hospitals.

This presents an important opportunity for Africa to improve knowledge sharing around issues of 'greening' and sustainability in the health sector. Many of Africa's healthcare goals have much in common with the IHF's goals of connecting hospitals and other like-minded organisations, in an effort to improve healthcare. One of the instrumental campaigns involved in healthcare sustainability efforts in Africa and globally is the Global Green and Healthy Hospitals (GGHH) Network initiative.

The Global Green and Healthy Hospitals Network

The GGHH Network was launched internationally in the early 2000s, and later in Africa in 2013 by international advocacy coalition Health Care Without Harm (HCWH). GGHH is made up of 717 members in 40 countries on six continents, representing 20, 800 hospitals and health centres. In Africa, GGHH is rolled out and facilitated by HCWH's South African member, environmental justice NGO, groundWork. groundWork together with HCWH are organizing a side event to the WHC on the 31st of October called "Global Green and Healthy Health Systems". This is the first time an event of such global reach and diverse participation will be held parallel to the WHC.

Africa's and South Africa's involvement in the GGHH programme is on the rise, with the Western Cape Department of Health enrolling all 56 of its hospitals, 17 of which are actively involved. Fourteen of the City of Johannesburg's ideal clinics have registered, as well as six hospitals in KwaZulu Natal, one hospital in Kenya, one in Morocco and 12 hospitals spread out across Ghana, Tanzania and Madagascar. The goal is to have the involvement of all healthcare structures in Africa and across the globe.

Climate change as a health sector issue

Given the seriousness of environmental conservation and sustainable healthcare, there is a growing demand by the public that governments engage at the nexus of sustainable development, climate and health. The adoption of the Sustainable Development Goals and the Paris Platform at the United Nations climate negotiations (CoP21) in Paris have fostered a public awareness around the environment, climate change and health. The health sector plays an integral role in ensuring that people's health and climate change remains at the forefront of decision maker's actions.

Clinics, hospitals, and health systems around the globe are already taking innovative steps to reduce their own carbon footprint, invest in clean renewable energy, develop resiliency strategies, educate their staff and patients, and advocate for policy that protects public health from the impacts of climate change and promotes environmental health. The GGHH programme has played a fundamental role in ensuring these changes are realised.

Goals towards greener health care

Joining hospitals and healthcare organisations sign a letter of intent and adopt two or more of the 10 interconnected GGHH sustainability goals. These goals are:

- **Leadership:** In the form of hospitals creating leaders and structures that will support and work towards implementing strategies in line with public policy and that promote environmental health, creating organisational change and hospital worker and community engagement.
- **Chemicals:** Substituting harmful chemicals with safer alternatives to improve the safety and health of patients, staff, community and the environment.
- **Waste management:** Encouraging participants to reduce, treat and safely dispose of health care waste, which includes toxic waste.
- **Energy:** Reducing fossil fuel-based energy and opting for more sustainable renewable energy, therefore reducing harmful emissions.
- **Water:** Conserving and reducing the hospitals' water use through recycling and treatment measures. Under this goal, hospitals are also encouraged to promote public health by providing potable water to the community.
- **Transportation:** Improved strategies for patients and staff in an effort to reduce the hospitals' contribution to local pollution.
- **Food:** Encouraging hospitals to promote healthy eating habits in patients and staff. It also hopes to see hospitals reducing their footprint by using locally and sustainably sourced food in the community.
- **Pharmaceuticals:** Reducing pharmaceutical pollution by reducing over-prescription practices, minimising pharmaceutical waste disposal, ending the dumping of pharmaceuticals and promoting manufacturing take-back.
- **Buildings:** Improving buildings by supporting environmental conscious hospital design and construction.
- **Purchasing:** Encouraging hospitals towards buying safer and more sustainable products and materials from socially and environmentally responsible suppliers.

HCWH and groundWork help GGHH member hospitals achieve these goals by providing guidance sustainability documents, through organising webinar series, conferences and knowledge sharing events and GGHH Connect, an online platform where members can share ideas, ask questions, report their progress and view useful case studies. The usefulness of past efforts has seen membership grow and has strengthened unity between member hospitals.