

Symposium | Global Mental Health : [Symposium 79] Symposium on Climate change and mental health

📅 Sun. Sep 28, 2025 9:00 AM - 10:30 AM JST | Sun. Sep 28, 2025 12:00 AM - 1:30 AM UTC 🏛️ Session
Room 2 (Main Hall B)

[Symposium 79] Symposium on Climate change and mental health

Moderator: Meryam Schouler-Ocak (Charité University), Tsuyoshi Akiyama (World Federation for Mental Health)

[SY-79-02] Climate change and mental health in Australasia and the Pacific

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Keywords : Climate change、Mental health、Anxiety

Background: Anthropogenic warming of the climate system is recognized as “unequivocal” and considered by the Lancet/UCL Commission to be “the greatest threat to human health of the 21st century.” Many of the postulated health impacts of climate change involve mental health, and these are likely to be great.

Objectives: To consider (i) the likely impact of climate change on population mental health based in Australasia and the Pacific (ii) the role of psychiatry in climate change mitigation.

Methods: Review of extant literature on climate change and mental health.

Findings: We present the evidence around the predicted psychiatric morbidity and mortality associated with climate change, with an emphasis on Australasian and Pacific Island data. We show that the effects of climate change are already starting to impact on the psycho-social, economic and cultural determinants of mental health, with these effects likely to increase exponentially over time. For low low-lying and island communities, a key stressor is the existential threat posed by rising sea levels. Many Pacific Islanders face the prospect of losing their homes, ancestral lands, and cultural heritage. This displacement leads to ‘climate anxiety’ especially amongst younger people. Additionally, the degradation of natural resources essential for livelihoods—such as fishing and agriculture—creates economic instability. This financial strain not only fuels anxiety but also undermines traditional support networks.

Conclusions: Climate change is likely to have a significant impact on population mental health. While Pacific Peoples demonstrate remarkable resilience through community solidarity and cultural practices, to safeguard mental health, it is vital to integrate psychological support into climate adaptation strategies. Psychiatrists, both individually and collectively, have a role to play in preparing for, and developing mitigation strategies against such effects.