**Fighting climate change in healthcare: pioneering medical curriculum to be developed in Pécs**

According to the American Medical Association, addressing the wide-ranging health effects of climate change will become a medical specialty in its own right within a decade, and the WHO estimates that the number of deaths from climate change could rise by a quarter of a million a year by 2050, but the topic is currently only a potential topic in medical education. The Medical School of the UP is now leading the development of a ground-breaking internationally recognised curriculum.

Heat waves - a dramatic rise in serious cardiovascular problems. Persistent high UV radiation - increase in skin diseases and lesions. These are perhaps the most obvious examples of the health impacts of climate change, but they are far more widespread and are already permeating the health sector as a whole. However, they have yet to be tackled at a systemic level, largely because climate change is not sufficiently mainstreamed in medical education. This is the reason for the CLIMATEMED project, an international curriculum development project led by the Medical School of the UP.

"In the context of climate change, it is important to distinguish between the adverse effects on individual health and those affecting the care system," says Dr János Girán, Assistant Professor at the Institute of Public Healt of the Medical School of the UP, and the project's technical leader. "Of course, the individual effects can be very serious, but they are exacerbated if the care system and its staff are not adequately prepared to deal with them". And the range of adverse health effects of climate change is staggeringly wide, including risks we might not think of.

"Most of us probably know how important it is to protect our skin from UV radiation at the beach, but far fewer people realise that we need to be aware of this in our everyday lives - not to mention that, in addition to skin health, prolonged exposure to high levels of UV radiation can cause serious eye problems. The impact is even more far-reaching with the emergence of so-called new disease vectors, such as different species of mosquitoes and parasites, which can survive in our climate due to climate change, and spread diseases that have not been dealt with in our part of the world and therefore have not been a daily task for most doctors to diagnose and treat," he says.

There are also some less obvious links, such as the emergence of mental health problems caused by climate change: climate anxiety and post-traumatic stress caused by the increasing frequency of natural disasters. And climate change can also have a serious impact on our health and, through it, on the whole care system in much less dramatic ways: for example, János Girán and colleagues are investigating the impact of increasingly frequent significant changes in air pressure on people with respiratory diseases.

Despite examples that could go on and on, climate change is still only a small part of the curriculum at medical schools: according to a 2019 survey by the International Federation of Medical Students' Associations (IFMSA), only 15 percent of the 2817 medical schools surveyed worldwide had a separate course on the topic.

Curriculum development under the European Union's Erasmus+ program has several objectives. The first is the detailed development of a 14-week course covering a full semester on the health impacts of climate change, how to address them and how to prevent them. In addition, János Girán said that the curriculum for medical training is already very crowded, so in addition to the stand-alone course, a "sensitization" training and methodological guide will be developed to help trainers integrate climate change knowledge into their existing courses. Finally, it is very important to integrate knowledge of the health impacts of climate change into the work of practising doctors, and training materials will be developed to this end.

The consortium, led by the Medical School of the UP, includes the National Centre for Public Health, the National University of Ireland, University College Cork , the Medical and Pharmaceutical University of Târgu Mures and the Centar za zdravlje, vežbanje i sportske nauke in Novi Sad. The curriculum is expected to be ready by autumn 2024 and will be available to all European medical schools.

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