

Embedding climate knowledge and understanding in the new healthcare workforce through Climate Fresk

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Embedding climate knowledge and understanding in the new healthcare workforce through Climate Fresk

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Background:

Healthcare students are planning careers in the health and care system that seeks to become Net Zero. They need sufficient understanding and awareness of climate change (i.e., poor air quality, excessive heat and climate events like flooding) as a threat to health and wellness.

This new and urgent curriculum demand presents a challenge to those entering the health and care workforce; engaging students in such a way that enables and activates them as ‘net zero’ practitioners. However, due to pressure within accredited degree programmes to address profession specific skills and knowledge, delivering as taught, timetabled curriculum content which focuses on climate change and health is of a lower priority.

The Climate Fresk method is a 3-hour workshop based on a card sorting game for up to 12 people to learn about the causes and consequences of climate change and develop their own, or organisational climate pledges.

Aim:

- To design and pilot the delivery of ‘Climate Fresk’ education and training on climate change and health to a student cohort.
- To support staff to integrate climate change and health education into existing awards.

Method:

12 Climate Champions were recruited from the undergraduate and postgraduate student body in a large College of Health, Wellbeing and Life Sciences. The group were engaged as student ambassadors and together with four staff were trained as Climate Fresk facilitators.

College funded an initial 12-month programme with support from the organisation for on-line and face to face sessions.

Student Climate Champions initially sought to recruit to a CEKO (Climate Education Kick Off) event for all health students, but attendance was poor (6 out of 35 participants attended).

The CEKO was therefore embedded in a 2nd year Occupational Therapy undergraduate degree course module. 45 students participated with 6 Climate Champions and the Climate Fresk facilitator.

- A bespoke session to introduce specific examples from clinical practice was included to make practice links.

Results:

The students evaluated the programme positively.

- A relatively time-limited programme is advantageous
- Students appreciated the chance to consider and contribute to improvement ideas and methods

Staff and students were consulted to assess how to scale this curriculum across other programmes.

- In addition, staff from several other disciplines were enabled to assess the value of the specific programme for their own students and appraise how to include sustainability and environmental education.

The programme has demonstrated the importance of engaging students to co-lead climate initiatives and enable a shared commitment to learning and understanding the risk of unsustainable practices in health and care.

Lessons Learnt:

- Novel methods and platforms are required to ensure the climate change agenda is addressed in healthcare students without detriment to other curriculum pressures
- All staff and students need to have the opportunity to engage with the ‘climate crisis’ and so establishing awareness across the health/clinical leadership in paramount
- Make the content bespoke/profession specific to highlight the relevance to practice and encourage engagement
- Embed the training into timetabled, taught content sessions to highlight the importance
- Students benefit from casual/ambassador contracts that can be undertaken as part of a flexible curriculum and the workplan arranged to contribute to the delivery of the programme