

THE NEW SECTION FOR ENVIRONMENTAL SUSTAINABILITY — AN INVITATION!

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Welcome to the newly founded CAS Section for Environmental Sustainability. We hope that you will recognize how much your participation is needed!

The quality of healthcare systems determines the physical and mental well-being of a population, contributing both to a healthy workforce and the economic prosperity of a nation. As healthcare practitioners—nurses, techs, residents, or anesthesiologists—we are all a crucial part of healthcare. For most of us, taking care of and helping our patients is more than just a job, it is our calling. We take this very seriously and have devoted a significant portion of our lives towards attaining and maintaining the very highest standards in our care.

While our role at the patient level is not changing, how do we react if we are told that our practice itself is indirectly hurting the health of the population? More and more we realize that healthcare practices are an indirect contributor to the health burden that is increasing over time. In fact, the healthcare industry is the second largest industrial producer of greenhouse gases, right behind the food industry. Hospitals across Canada consume the electricity of approximately 440,000 homes and an average surgical case can produce the same amount of waste as a household of four does in a week. More and more we learn just how bad our inhalational anesthetics are for the atmosphere and how they are accumulating in the air in even the most remote locations on the planet. None of us practise with the intent to harm, but many of the practices in our work lives are harmful. We are doing great work as individuals but our continued use and wastage of resources endangers the health of the planet at large. We should not have to choose between the patient and the planet; every effort should be made to develop a practice that favours both.

With this vision, a group of CAS members proposed starting a Section with a focus on environmentally-sustainable practices in anesthesiology and it was approved by the Board at the meeting in Montréal as the CAS Section for Environmental Sustainability.

What we need is dissemination of current knowledge, the discovery of new knowledge, and an exploration of ways to practise that consider the patient, the environment, and the true cost. Our Section will look at different areas where the jobs of an anesthesiologist, anesthetic assistant, peri-anesthesia nurse, and surgeon may affect the environment, and it is our goal to identify ways of lowering the environmental impact in all the areas we work. We plan to develop separate committees within the Section to explore these aspects of our specialty and we would love to see you participate as much as possible. Further, we aim to combine these efforts with other international societies and associations concerned with health and the environment.

The World Health Organization has declared climate change the number one threat to (human) life in the 21st century and is appealing to healthcare professionals all across the planet. We live in a time of unparalleled technological wonder, but also in a time of the sixth mass extinction, overpopulation, loss of biodiversity, and global warming. We can start by educating ourselves and spreading the knowledge we have acquired. This is why we need you! Join us in our vision of creating a sustainable practice in anesthesia and perioperative medicine. Let us collectively contribute to a future that is healthier for all.

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