

THE ETHICAL DIMENSIONS OF A CHANGING CLIMATE

Colin Soskolne, University of Alberta, Canada

Global warming is causing more frequent and severe extremes in weather. Sea-levels are rising with island states poised to vanish. Over time, these trends are expected to worsen. If some predictions materialize, a sixth major extinction awaits us. What could be more important for environmental epidemiologists than to help inform policies that might avert such catastrophic harms? *En route* to possible extinction, as global average heating continues, local habitats will change thereby exposing local populations to environmental harms through exposure to challenges not before seen in such communities. Studying potential harms is prerequisite to health planning. Despite the ethical imperative to pursue research to help with adaptation, access to funds for research is less likely in a context of ideologically driven policy that denies climate change. Countries contributing both to denial and to greenhouse gas emissions are the more affluent in the world where wealth allows them a buffer against extremes in weather. Meanwhile, the poorer countries, not contributing to the accumulation of emissions, do not have buffering capacity and are suffering the greatest negative impacts from weather changes. These phenomena are leading to a widening of the 90:10 gap where 90% of the world's research funding goes into the study of problems affecting only 10% of the global population. This session will reflect on the Polluter Pays and the Post-Cautionary Principles. The hardships resulting in the countries where land is being bought by rich countries with the sole ambition of feeding their local populations will also be addressed. The presentation aims to engage the audience and provide the opportunity for discussion by identifying, among others, the principles noted above in each of this session's presented papers.