A message from Dr. Peter Yellowlees, Chief Wellness Officer

Combating climate change at UC Davis Health

We all know the adverse impact of human behavior on climate, and our personal and community responsibility to reduce the rate of climate change by living differently.

It is very gratifying to be able to point out the many impressive efforts being made at UC Davis Health to reduce carbon emissions. So for “Good Stuff” this week I asked Colleen McCormick and Dr. William Pevec, two of our leaders in this area, to describe a number of our efforts, in the hope of stimulating yet more initiatives in this crucial task.

Here is what they have written for “Good Stuff.”

“Humankind has not woven the thread of life. We are but one thread within it. Whatever we do to the web, we do to ourselves. All things are bound together...all things connect.”
–Chief Seattle

April 22 is Earth Day. April 19-23 is Earth Week.

What better time to reflect on the environmental impact of the healing work we do? Worldwide, health care contributes 4.4% of total greenhouse gas emissions, and per capita, U.S. health care is the biggest emitter with 8.5% of U.S. carbon emissions.

Hospitals generate an enormous amount of waste – plastics, paper, building materials and energy consumption. And hospitals serve a great deal of food for patients and staff. Modern
methods of food production have major adverse effects on the environment, including excess water consumption and pollution, loss of biodiversity, and depletion and erosion of soil.

All of these environmental impacts run counter to our mission to improve the well-being of our patients. Fortunately many of our colleagues at UC Davis Health are making inroads to improve our footprint.

Colleen McCormick, Director of Sustainability at UC Davis Health, is responsible for developing, leading, and coordinating all sustainability-related initiatives and strategies across the health system. Her efforts include chairing the UC Davis Health Sustainability Committee, providing recommendations for systemwide sustainability goals and developing programs to meet the adopted goals, and coordinating annual data submittals to the UC Office of the President and Practice Greenhealth for tracking sustainability metrics and progress.

In 2020, UC Davis Health received the following recognitions from Practice Greenhealth:

The **Emerald Award** for UC Davis Health’s commitment to improving its environmental performance and its efforts in achieving a top standard of excellence in sustainability.

The **Greening the OR Recognition Award** that recognizes hospitals that significantly improved environmental performance in the operating room.

The Circles of Excellence honor is given to 10 of the highest-performing hospitals nationwide in each area of sustainability expertise. Winners must achieve the Greenhealth Partner for
Change Award, and in this category UC Davis Health was awarded the **Circle of Excellence on Food** and the **Circle of Excellence in Green Building**.

Dr. William Pevec created and chairs the Health Professionals Sustainability Working Group, which meets monthly and has a wide range of initiatives being introduced by those involved. He is always looking for more individuals with passion and energy who want to help our efforts combating climate change.

![William Pevec, clearing trails at the UC Davis Stebbins Cold Canyon Reserve after the fires this past summer](image)

Daniel Mendonsa, Energy Manager at the Medical Center, is focused on increasing our energy efficiency and reducing our water usage. Water-use audits were complete in 2018 and have resulted in saving over 8 million gallons per year. Energy-use audits on 30% of our buildings are wrapping up, and energy reduction measures such as LED lighting and thermostat upgrades are currently being implemented on 10% of our buildings. Our newest building, the North Addition, is certified as LEED Platinum, the highest level awarded for sustainable buildings.

Also underway are measurements to determine if hourly air exchanges in the operating rooms can be decreased without affecting safety or function, with the potential to reduce energy use by 55% and save over $50,000 in energy costs annually.
Did you know that our medical center generates 459 tons of waste every month? Thomas Ocheltree, Operational Waste Programs Administrator, is leading the charge to reduce that staggering amount. He directed an effort to reduce “red bag” biohazardous waste that must first be autoclaved before entering the landfill, resulting in the first year in the elimination of 91 tons of red bag waste, keeping about 25 tons of carbon dioxide out of the atmosphere, and saving the medical center more than $36,000.

He is also developing a program to recycle “blue wrap,” the plasticized paper used to package sterile instruments, that is traditionally impossible to recycle due to the hybrid of materials used to make it. The medical center purchases almost 12 tons of blue wrap annually. Tom has identified a vendor who can recycle our blue wrap into scrubs, basins, bins, etc., with a plan to have that program up and running, fittingly, by Earth Day.

Thanks to Santana Diaz, Executive Chef, UC Davis Medical Center is recognized as a leader in sustainable food procurement and menus. Under his direction, UC Davis is the first health system in the country to be listed on the Good Food 100, which recognizes restaurants for sustainable and local food procurement, and the first and only hospital in the U.S. to be recognized by the James Beard Foundation as a Smart Catch Leader for sustainable procurement of seafood. UC Davis Health is the only UC institution to receive the Practice Greenhealth Circle of Excellence for Food in 2020.

These are but a few examples of the ongoing sustainability initiatives at UC Davis Health. There is much more that we can do, and we have an active group of staff working on a wide range of projects.
If you are interested in helping to advance these efforts, please contact Colleen McCormick, Director of Sustainability (cjmccorm@ucdavis.edu), or William Pevec for the Health Professionals Sustainability Working Group (wcpevec@ucdavis.edu). Together, we can continue to make our health system healthier – for our patients and ourselves and our families.

Shout Out for Dr. Marcio Malogolowkin

Quality patient care happens at all hours, and Dr. Marcio Malogolowkin knows that. The Department of Pediatrics would like to recognize Dr. Malogolowkin, division chief of Pediatric Hematology/Oncology; he recently drove to the hospital at 11:30 p.m. to meet with a patient and their family. Satyan Lakshminrusimha, Department Chair, thinks that Dr. Malogolowkin is a true representative of UC Davis Health: “Dr. M is the most compassionate, experienced and talented oncologist I have come across in my career. His devotion and dedication make us proud.” Thank you for all that you do, Dr. Malogolowkin!

E8 Medical/Surgical Specialties
“The meal[s] were quite satisfying, I had no problem with the meals and everything to the change of my meals upon my request worked out perfectly.”

Emergency Pavilion
“I’ve never liked using an ER, and delayed going because I was concerned about the wait time and Covid exposure, but this experience was quite positive and they discovered a new, serious health condition that needs treatment.”

Internal Medicine Clinic Ambulatory Care Center
“I have memory issues and do not recall small details. This office always protects my safety and I have no concerns with any of the staff.”
Midtown Clinic
“I appreciate the efforts that are being put forth to keep everyone safe.”

OB/GYN Glassrock
“I’ve already talked to a few people about my great experience and my awesome results so far. I don’t have a single bad thing I could even say about my experience, from front desk to being wheeled out to the car I had an excellent time under the care of my team.”