

April 30, 2026

Cooper Medical School of Rowan University

Initial Proposal made to the Curriculum Committee May, 2023

Scholarly Concentration: Climate Health

The World Health Organization has called climate change the single greatest threat to human health. Numerous medical societies and organizations have echoed this concern. According to the Association of American Medical Colleges, almost 70% of medical schools are now incorporating climate health content into their medical curricula. (Mallon WT, Cox N, Bush V, Willcocks EJ, Mo J. Curricula on the Health Impacts of a Changing Environment at U.S. Medical Schools: A Snapshot as of Fall 2024. Association of American Medical Colleges; 2025. [in press].) The American College of Graduate Medical Education (ACGME) has plans to create a new climate health fellowship within internal medicine by 2035. There is recognition that climate medicine impacts health across the patient spectrum but especially to already disenfranchised communities. Medical students need to be prepared to meet the needs of patients in their future practice. CMSRU has been committed to the social determinants of health since its inception. The ecological determinants of health which focus on where people live, work, and play are recognized to be even more foundational.

Students who pursue a Scholarly Concentration in Climate Health will undertake additional studies in environment and health, health policy, advocacy, and sustainability practices. Students will begin to cultivate important leadership skills and develop the knowledge, skills and attitudes to become effect patient advocates. Students will work to incorporate research and quality improvement into climate health understanding and will learn about health policy and systems.

Placement in the Concentration will be considered for current M2 students who have completed an application process and who are in strong academic standing. Acceptance will be at the discretion of the lead faculty. A file will be maintained on each student in the concentration. To successfully complete the program, students must consistently maintain good academic standing and meet all the listed requirements. Students who are unable to fulfill all requirements may withdrawal prior to graduation. Completion of the scholarly concentration will be noted on the student's MSPE and academic transcript.

Lead faculty: Elizabeth Cerceo, MD

Other faculty: Anna Panchesnikov, MD, Urogynecology; Swarna Rajagopalan, MD, Neurology; Vedam Gummadi, MD, Hospital Medicine; Samer Badr, MD, Hospital Medicine; Tina Edmonston, MD, Pathology; Anat Feingold, MD, Infectious Disease; Shawana Hussain, MD, Critical Care; Jennifer Garefino, Performance Improvement Office; John Porter, MD, Associate Dean Diversity, Equity, Inclusion; Danielle Nordone, DO, Family Medicine; Lori Winter, MD, Pediatrics; Muhammed (Jawaad) Hussain, MD, Pediatrics; Louis Mitrev, MD, Anesthesia; Krystal Lazos, Dir Nursing Quality, Practice, and Innovation

Goals:

Gain knowledge in environment and health, health policy, advocacy, and sustainability practices
Learn to be a leader and advocate in climate health
Learn to incorporate research and quality improvement into climate health understanding

Learning Objectives: Upon completion of this scholarly concentration, students will be able
--to describe a range of climate impacts on specific medical conditions' relation to individual and population health.

--to understand how environmental justice communities can be impacted by climate factors.

--to understand how the social determinants of health are amplified by climate risks.

--to appreciate how climate disasters can affect patient care delivery.

--to become more empowered to advocate for climate and environmental initiatives that can positively impact health.

--to develop the skills to conduct quality improvement projects in the healthcare sector

--to describe the role of advocacy in patient care and population health.

Process Objectives: By the end of the concentration students will:

--write a perspective piece or op-ed to influence policy on climate health in the preclinical years.

--prepare and deliver at least one lecture at the medical school in climate health (such as during Lunch & Learn sessions or a recorded session for the Medical Society Consortium on Climate & Health).

--be actively involved in the climate medicine group at CMSRU by attending >80% of meetings and leading at least one activity.

--submit an abstract, presentation, or publication a scholarly work in climate health and have capstone project idea, literature review, and bibliography prepared by December of M2 year.

--contribute to one quality improvement project at Cooper University Health Care with a sustainability focus or at CMSRU with the Green Committee.

--compile all activities and projects in a final summary presentation, incorporating how this will inform future career paths and clinical care.

Capacity: 4 students/class

Requirements

Within the MD curriculum, students must:

--Complete the selective course in climate health.

--Identify a faculty mentor and complete a Capstone Project related to Climate Health in the Scholar's Workshop, including a poster presentation and/or article submission.

--Students will meet with Dr. Cerceo once per semester.

Outside the MD curriculum, students must

--Attend at least four Medicine Grand Rounds on climate health.

--Attend ten other climate health lectures and submit to their faculty mentor a one-paragraph description of something they take away from each event. Qualifying events include Dr. Cerceo's virtual seminar series, online grand rounds and lecture series; students

will be provided with an approved list of seminar series to choose from. If the student selects another event, they will first need approval from their faculty advisor.

- Participate in a leadership role within CMSRU's chapter of Medical Students for a Sustainable Future
- Present at least one lecture on Climate Health
- Work with colleagues to update the Planetary Health Report Card
- Engage in one advocacy issue in the medical school (example, initiatives at medical school like turning off lights, waste audits) or hospital (example, partnering with a community organization to support a patient population), navigating systems issues
- Submit a final paper listing the activities they have participated in and led, briefly summarizing what they have learned from the scholarly concentration, and speculating on how they will use what they have learned in their careers.

Activity	Hours	Mandatory
Curricular		
Complete the M1/2 selective in Climate Health	12	Yes
Complete a Capstone Project related to Climate Health	20	Yes
Extracurricular		
Participate in at least four Medicine Grand Rounds on climate health	4	Yes
Contribute to one CUHC/CMSRU quality improvement project with a sustainability focus	20	Yes
Attend 10 other climate health lectures and submit descriptions of take-aways	15	Yes
Present one lecture to the medical students on climate health	10	Yes
Write a perspective piece or op-ed for submission to a journal with a climate health focus	10	Yes
Participate in a leadership role in CMRSU's chapter of Medical Students for a Sustainable Future	15	Yes
Engage in one advocacy issue in the medical school or hospital, including updating the Planetary Health Report Card	12	Yes
Prepare a paper in the M4 year summarizing activities and learning	2	Yes
Total	120	
Hours needed to complete the Concentration	120	

Resources for Lectures:

<https://www.dropbox.com/scl/fi/d6c9aktq2ymjs9lkg9prw/Med-student-resources.docx?rlkey=g9cok3dtr43m5t70s435l69h8&st=6v2xpxik&dl=0>

[Climate Crisis and Clinical Medicine Virtual Elective for Medical Students – Emory Office of Sustainability Initiatives](#)

[Our Past Events — NH Healthcare Workers For Climate Action \(nhclimatehealth.org\)](#)

Medical Society Consortium for Climate and Health lectures

