

50th Anniversary of Earth Day

Today celebrates the FIFTIETH ANNIVERSARY of Earth Day.

This year, it is unlike past celebrations because we will observe it virtually, not with PARADES; on-line, not with FESTIVALS; on Social Media, not TOGETHER. Earth Day 1970 brought together 20 million Americans into the sunshine for peaceful demonstrations for environmental reform. It is now observed in 192 countries around the world.

In the era of COVID-19, we have a new together, where we look at the next 50 years with a heightened respect for what it takes to be a truly global community. This year's theme is Climate Change Action, and FIGO believes that we as obstetrician gynecologists should take a lead role. Recently we published a White Paper: [FIGO Statement on Climate Crisis and Health](#). In it we state that global health is our guiding light. We recommend that the Climate Crisis be recognised for the global emergency it is, and health care providers lead in education, advocacy and research in responding to changing health consequences and the global awareness that is needed.

Earth Day is an annual event, celebrated around the world to observe environmental protection. In 1990, the [Earth Day-20 International Peace Climb](#) was observed with an international expedition to reach the summit of Mount Everest during Earth Week. It was the first time in history that mountaineers from the USA, Russia and China roped together to climb a mountain. In 2016, the Paris Agreement on Climate Change was signed on Earth Day.

OBGYNs should be aware that adverse obstetric outcomes are impacted by Climate Change. Extreme weather (primarily heat and natural disasters) and air pollutants (principally fine particulate matter (PM2.5) and ozone) impact the health of mothers and the fetus. In particular, we see an increase in preterm birth, low birthweight, and stillbirth. Adverse neonatal outcomes affected by these exposures include neurodevelopmental delay, autism spectrum disorder, and cardiac defects.

The adverse health effects are not limited to obstetric and pediatric outcomes. Recent data point to a series of health complications that span the entire life course, including respiratory and cardiovascular disease, fertility complications, and impacts on mental health. However, the risks to pregnant women and the developing fetus pose perhaps the greatest risk to global population health due to long term impacts on current and future generations.

In recognition of the need for a world federation to address the threat of toxic environmental chemicals to human reproductive and developmental health on the global stage, FIGO adopted its opinion, [Reproductive Health Impacts of Exposure to Toxic Environmental Chemicals](#). When this opinion on environmental exposures was released at the FIGO World Congress of 2015, FIGO established a global Working Group on the topic of Reproductive and Developmental Environmental Health (RDEH). This working group set a global agenda on the impact of toxic exposures impacting women's health.

In 2018 our working group was recognised for the impact it has had and was designated a formal FIGO Committee. RDEH will continue to lead efforts on environment and health in each of the FIGO regions, and with our member organisations.

If you are interested in being an Environmental Health Champion, please contact FIGO headquarters. We can use the passion, energy, and the advocacy as we lead the challenges of the next 50 years.

About FIGO

FIGO is a professional organisation that brings together obstetrical and gynecological associations from all over the world.

FIGO's vision is that women of the world achieve the highest possible standards of physical, mental, reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing throughout their lives. We lead on global programme activities, with a particular focus on sub-Saharan Africa and South East Asia.

FIGO advocates on a global stage, especially in relation to the Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs) pertaining to reproductive, maternal, newborn, child and adolescent health and non-communicable diseases (SDG3). We also work to raise the status of women and enable their active participation to achieve their reproductive and sexual rights, including addressing FGM and gender based violence (SDG5).

We also provide education and training for our Member Societies and build capacities of those from low-resource countries through strengthening leadership, good practice and promotion of policy dialogues.

FIGO is in official relations with the World Health Organization (WHO) and a consultative status with the United Nations (UN).