Heat-health action plans in Europe: Challenges ahead and how to tackle them

High temperatures have periodically affected large areas in Europe and urban settings. In particular, the deadly 2003 summer heat waves precipitated a multitude of national and subnational health prevention and research efforts. Building on these and other international experiences the WHO Regional Office for Europe developed and published in 2008 a comprehensive framework for prevention, the heat-health action plans (HHAPs). This provided a blueprint used by several national and subnational authorities to design their prevention efforts. A decade after the publication of the WHO guidance, a wealth of new evidence and acquired implementation experience has emerged around HHAP effectiveness; heat exposure; acclimatization and adaptation; heat-health governance and stakeholder involvement; and the role of urban design and greening interventions in prevention. This evidence and experience can guide the strategies to tackle current and upcoming challenges in protecting health from heat under a warming climate.

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