



IPH Open Conference

Green agenda:
The benefits of nature contact for physical,
mental, and social well-being

DLR Nature for Health Group

Overview

- Importance of Green Agenda
- Theoretical Rationale
- Health benefits of nature contact
- Possible uses of nature in healthcare settings
- Local, national, and international initiatives
- Future directions

DLR Nature for Health Group Aims

A green form titled "children & nature NETWORK" with a leaf logo. Below the title is "Nature Play Prescription". It includes fields for "Dr. _____", "Name: _____", and "Date: _____". A section titled "Your Healthcare Provider encourages you to:" lists three bullet points: "Go outside and play in nature.", "Limit your 'Screen Time' to no more than 60 mins each day.", and "Read stories about nature. (Or have someone read them to you.)". At the bottom, there are lines for "Signed: Provider: _____" and "Parent/Child: _____".

Importance of Green Agenda

- Rise in chronic diseases
- Aging population
- Unsustainable health care systems
- Urbanisation
- Increase in technology use
- Disconnection from nature



Healthy Ireland (2013)

Details the close relationship between physical and mental health and the environment, physical activity, and social interaction.

Key Theories

- The Biophilia Hypothesis (Wilson, 1994)
- Attention Restoration Theory (Kaplan & Kaplan, 1995)
- The Psychophysiological Stress Recovery Theory (Ulrich, 1983)

The Evidence Base: Systematic Reviews

1. A systematic review of evidence for the added benefits to health of exposure to natural environments (Bowler et al., 2010)
2. A systematic review of the health and well-being benefits of biodiverse environments (Lovell et al., 2014)
3. Does participating in physical activity in outdoor natural environments have a greater effect on physical and mental wellbeing than physical activity indoors? A systematic review (Thompson Coon et al., 2011)

The Evidence Base: RCTs

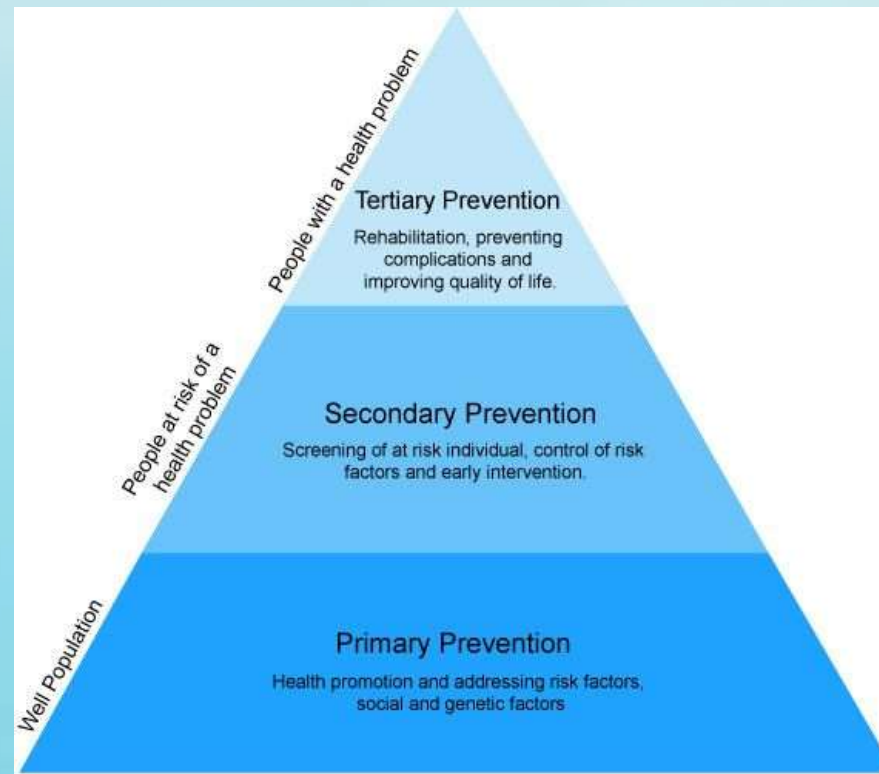
1. Bratman et al. (2015) contact with nature reduces rumination. Rumination is associated with anxiety and depression. Nature experiences can block/counteract rumination, reducing the risks of developing mental disorders.
2. Lee et al. (2015) viewing natural spaces improves cognitive functioning; results in lower omission errors and more consistent responding to task
3. Lee et al. (2013) forest therapy reduces negative mood states, anxiety, and heart rate. It also facilitates parasympathetic nervous system activity (rest n digest) by supressing the sympathetic nervous system (fight or flight). Over activity of SNS linked to hypertension and heart failure.
4. Mao et al. (2012) forest bathing improves human hypertension and inflammation, preventing cardiovascular disorders.

The Evidence Base: Other Studies

- Views of green space reduce post surgery hospital stays (Ulrich, 1984) and violence and aggression (Kuo & Sullivan, 2001)
- Park et al., (2010) Shinrin-Yoku has been shown to lower blood pressure, pulse rate and decrease cortisol (released in response to stress) in a study of 24 forests in Japan
- Li (2010) Time spent in nature improves immune system functioning
- MIND (2013) Ecotherapy improved mental and physical wellbeing; increased physical activity; enhanced social connections; promoted local community involvement.

Green Agenda

WHO Ottawa Charter (1986) Re-orientating health care services towards prevention of illness and promotion of health



Green Agenda



Local Initiatives



dlr Biodiversity Events

September–December 2015

ALL EVENTS ARE FREE



National Initiatives



International Initiatives



Moving Forward

- Raise awareness among general public, health & environmental professionals
- Develop Green Prescription concept
- Partnerships between health and environmental sectors
- Future research: how nature impacts health, bigger sample sizes, illness specific and culturally diverse populations, the mediating effect of personality and different landscape types
- Develop pilot ecotherapy initiatives in range of healthcare settings

Thank You



www.naturehealthandwellbeing.ie