

**Missouri State Medical Association
House of Delegates**

Resolution # 17
(A-24)

Introduced by: Albert L. Hsu, MD

Subject: Promoting Sustainable Practices in Operating Rooms

Referred to:

1 **WHEREAS**, AMA Council on Science and Public Health Report 5 (I-23) "Promoting Multi-Use Devices and
2 Sustainable Practices in the Operating Room" states that

- 3 - Waste generation is costly to health care systems. It was estimated that the US health care
- 4 system spent 3.2 billion U.S. dollars in medical waste costs in 2017;
- 5 - The U.S. health sector is estimated to produce 6 billion tons of waste annually;
- 6 - Operating rooms (OR) are generally one of the most resource-intensive areas within hospitals
- 7 themselves, contributing roughly 20-33% of total health care waste and are a major driver of
- 8 hospital GHG emissions; and,
- 9

10 **WHEREAS**, at the 2023 "Open Endoscopy Forum," one presenter noted that

- 11 - *globally, healthcare accounts for TWICE the emissions of global aviation*
- 12 - *the pharmaceutical industry accounts for 13% more emissions than auto manufacturers.*
- 13 - *healthcare is currently on track to *double* its emissions by 2050.*
- 14 - *the healthcare industry is the biggest user of water, and the second biggest user of energy (after*
- 15 *food service/refrigeration), as well as the biggest producer of waste (14K tons of waste/day, with*
- 16 *20-25% as plastic waste, 15% as infectious/hazardous waste, 10-15% as food waste).*
- 17 - *71% of healthcare emissions are primarily derived from our supply chains through production,*
- 18 *transport, and disposal of goods and services, primarily due to single-use plastic petroleum*
- 19 *products.*
- 20 - *in healthcare, 60% of the average healthcare organization's supply costs and 30% of energy*
- 21 *costs are in the operating rooms. In fact, 1 hour's use of desflurane is equivalent to 375 miles of*
- 22 *driving in a car; and,*
- 23

24 **WHEREAS**, regarding the impact of climate and pollution effects on birth outcomes, in 68 studies
25 (including over 32 million births, as reported in 2020), there is an increased rate of preterm birth and
26 low birthweight with worsening climate effects (with the largest effect in black and minority
27 communities), and reducing the effects of pollution/climate change could result in a 27% reduction in
28 preterm birth; and,

29
30 **WHEREAS**, there have been increasing reports of micro plastics in human placentas now, and in every
31 placental membrane -- these plastics are often endocrine disruptors, such that to a disturbing effect, **our**
32 **babies are being born "pre-polluted;" and,**

33
34 **WHEREAS**, "nearly everything we do in the OR is related to culture and incentives, NOT evidence"
35 - "individual action doesn't matter and making climate change a personal responsibility distracts from
36 the impact of industry... but *we* are that industry!"; and,

37

38 **WHEREAS**, "we could reduce greenhouse gas emissions from a laparoscopic hysterectomy by 80% by
39 simply (a) minimising opened materials, (b) minimise the use of heat-trapping anaesthetic gases, (c)
40 maximise instrument reuse and single-use device reprocessing, (d) shutting off the lights in the OR after-
41 hours, etc."; and,
42

43 **WHEREAS**, one "conservative" argument for this endeavor is that we all have limited resources, and that
44 reducing waste is a good thing; and,
45

46 **WHEREAS**, one "liberal/progressive" argument for this endeavor is that efforts to reduce our carbon
47 footprint(s) will help mitigate the deleterious effects of climate change; and,
48

49 **WHEREAS**, one "take-home" message from the AMA CSAPH report above, is that "we used to think the
50 disposable devices in the OR would help minimize the risk of infection, but now we are throwing away a
51 lot of unopened devices in our ORs, contributing to a huge amount of unnecessary and harmful waste;
52 and,
53

54 **WHEREAS**, in 2022, our Missouri State Medical Association's Public Health Committee resolved to
55 monitor AMA action on the issues surrounding climate change, and report back to MSMA on a regular
56 basis; therefore, be it,
57

58 **RESOLVED**, that our Missouri State Medical Association (MSMA) communicate with the Missouri
59 Hospital Association, encouraging messages to their member hospitals about the importance of more
60 sustainable practices to reduce waste, such as using more reusable instead of disposable equipment in
61 operating rooms (and also including a copy of the AMA Council on Science and Public Health's report on
62 this issue); and, be it further,
63

64 **RESOLVED**, that our Missouri State Medical Association (MSMA) communicate with all physicians,
65 hospitals, and independent surgical centers in Missouri, emphasizing the importance of more
66 sustainable practices to reduce waste, such as using more reusable instead of disposable equipment in
67 operating rooms (and also including a copy of the AMA Council on Science and Public Health's report on
68 this issue); and, be it further,
69

70 **RESOLVED**, that our MSMA continue to monitor AMA action on climate change.

Fiscal Note: None

Current Policy:

REFERENCES

1. AMA Council on Science and Public Health Report 5 (I-23) "Promoting Multi-Use Devices and Sustainable Practices in the Operating Room
2. "Climate Change begins at 7:15; our unsustainable future in healthcare" presentation by Kelly Wright, Open Endoscopy Forum at < <https://endoscopyforum.com/> >
3. "How the US Health Care System contributes to Climate Change," by the Commonwealth fund, at < <https://www.commonwealthfund.org/publications/explainer/2022/apr/how-us-health-care-system-contributes-climate-change> >