An Inflection Point in the Climate Crisis and the Health of China

Controversy has surrounded climate change for many years and, in the past, has enhanced to an extreme degree because of environmental pollution in major cities located in China. Environmental pollution in these areas has been persistent due to the lack of regulation, which has put the whole population at risk. However, during the pandemic in China, where the virus of COVID-19 is said to have originated, there has been a considerable reduction in environmental pollution, which will thereby prevent severe health outcomes and result in many socioeconomic improvements while slowing down climate change. In my opinion, this pandemic will shed light on how individuals can actually impact the crisis and demonstrate that if a collective effort is put in, this issue can dwindle. Notably, it is disturbing that a pandemic has been even more responsive than many of our societies.

Throughout the decade, health impacts have only worsened due to the lack of adequate environmental policies and inaccessibility to health care. Globally, these statistics are apparent, which highlights the necessity to reduce emissions into the air as it only harms the individual. In relation, the World Health Organization states that clean health interventions are necessary as pollutants frequently "lodge deep inside the lungs" causing "asthma, bronchial symptoms, lung inflammation, and reduced lung function." If China were to reorganize its priority on managing hazards, it would not only allow for a decrease in mortality rates, but an improved economy. Continuing to allow uninterrupted environmental pollution will only cause complications that eventually will harm the world.

As part of a study on Chinese hospitals amid climate change, Tong and Hansen found that "95.6% [of people] believe that climate change had an adverse influence on population health." The public's perception is critical to combatting climate change as it will spread awareness and help in inputting health policies. Misinformation on all forms of media communication, however, has been a factor inhibiting climate change from being minimized just like a variety of social issues in our world. Contrastingly, as of late, the pandemic of COVID-19 has allowed for many social aspects, namely the health of individuals in China, to be affected positively. Reducing the number of patients admitted into the hospital during this crucial time is essential in order to conserve resources and allow for proper health care services. Physicians are already facing obstacles every day in trying to find a solution for the virus, so the fact that climate change factors are wearing off temporarily eases the stress on everyone's minds. Currently, in the New York Times article, *What the Coronavirus means for Climate Change,* Crist cited an outside study estimating that in the two critical months of the pandemic in China, "reduced pollution is likely to have saved the lives of 4,000 children under the age of 5 and 73,000 adults over the age of 70." I believe this offers a glimpse into how life would be if our carbon footprint were reduced in the future.

Additionally, the climate crisis, like other issues, will target the most vulnerable people, which is concerning. It really illuminates just how flawed societies are structured since many economies are centered on an unsustainable model. Thus, there needs to be more protection and direct aid offered for vulnerable people. Moreover, the Chinese government acting responsibly in advance with air pollution would have limitless advancements for the country. I think it is in China's best interest to pursue this avenue after the pandemic concludes because it has highlighted discrepancies in their management. In turn, a society free of polluted air would produce more employment opportunities and reduce poverty rates in China.

Now some people may refute this argument claiming that there is no existence of air pollution and that climate change is not real. Well, one of the major influences on climate change is actually the smog produced in China. The nitrogen oxide produced from combustion engines alongside fossil fuel emissions leaves a shadow of smog above major cities such as Beijing. In her article, [Yan writes that nearly 3 million deaths that occurred in the Hebei region of China were linked to the presence of smog particles]. Without air quality improvements, the climate crisis will most likely persist and put lives at risk, which is completely immoral. The health of these individuals should not be traded for the ignorance of societies that do not publicize and reduce pollutants. Obviously, this perspective is completely inaccurate and has scientific evidence that disproves its claim.

The Earth has to be restored from climate change in order for a positive trickle-down effect to be seen on the health of all populations, which should be the utmost objective. The people of China are seeing drastic health enhancements that will carry benefits moving forward if climate change is not neglected. Overall, this example further emphasizes that it is our moral duty to respond accordingly to the climate crisis since an inflection point has been attained due to the presence of the pandemic. Potentially, we can sustain the health of people and the Earth by doing our part in the climate crisis as hinted by the unanticipated outcome in China.