



Dupont Summit 2017

Science, Technology, and Environmental Policy

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Presentation

“Sustainability and Health: A Forward Agenda”

Since 1987, the concept of sustainability and sustainable development has developed into a major policy framework applied to economic development, environmental protection, community development, and, perhaps surprisingly but quite effectively, business management. Despite recognition of the importance of health as an element in sustainability, consideration of opportunities for health gains and reducing health disparities has been a secondary consideration. However, health is not automatically improved by commitment to sustainability. Sustainability provides a framework within which health gains and reduction in health disparities is possible and can be greatly facilitated but is not assured. Some sustainability measures are obvious in their health benefits: reducing pollution, ensuring food security and quality, and maintaining a healthful built environment, for example. Others are not obvious, but have profound indirect effects, such as energy, land use, and transportation policy, each of which bears on safety and community cohesiveness. This paper describes a path to integrating health and sustainability with respect to achieving health gains, suggests building on the existing framework of “health promotion” as both a bridge and a model, and proposes convening a dialogue between professionals in sustainability (primarily through academic environmental studies and sciences) and the health community (both patient-oriented healthcare and population health sciences).

KEY WORDS: sustainability, health, population health, health promotion

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