



Editorial

AEDV Sustainability Plan: A Commitment to Society



Health and sustainability are closely interconnected: health is both a priority and a right of all people, and society and governments must employ every available means to preserve and restore it. However, this must also be sustainable over time, both in terms of resource availability and the impact that health care *per se* has on the environment – and, ultimately, on the health of present and future generations. Currently, human health cannot be understood apart from the health of animals and the environment. This is the One Health concept. In fact, more than 200 health journals have called upon the United Nations, political leaders, and health professionals to recognize climate change as a global health concern.

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), around 23% of all deaths are linked to preventable environmental factors, including exposure to air, water, and soil pollution, as well as hazardous chemicals. Climate change and biodiversity loss represent an indivisible crisis that must be addressed jointly to preserve health. The seriousness, unusual nature, and unpredictability of the current situation – along with its public health implications that transcend national borders – have led the WHO to declare it a global health emergency.

These are just some of the many reasons why scientific societies must engage in the sustainability of our systems. In dermatology specifically, there are numerous sustainability-related aspects. Pollution agents, natural disasters, and atmospheric changes associated with climate change influence many skin diseases: they alter the virulence and epidemiological patterns of infectious agents, exacerbate immune-mediated and autoimmune inflammatory diseases, increase allergic dermatoses, and may even contribute to rising skin cancer rates due to greater sun exposure, high temperatures, and pollution.^{1,2}

Dermatological medical activities themselves have a significant environmental impact: a recent study found that the CO₂ emissions generated by a dermatology clinic serving about 30,000 patients in one year were equivalent to 145 round-trip flights from New York to London.³ Additionally, dermatology differs from other specialties in its extensive use of topical formulations, including both drugs and cosmetics. A substantial portion of these products end up in waste systems, impacting the environment – especially considering the plastic packaging used.⁴

The Spanish Academy of Dermatology and Venereology (AEDV) recognizes the urgent need to act against these environmental challenges. For this reason, the AEDV Sustainability Plan 2024–2026 was developed, reflecting our commitment to the environment, social responsibility, and sustainable development⁵ (Fig. 1). This plan was based on a survey that identified the most relevant sustainability objectives within the next three key areas of our activity.



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Fig. 1. AEDV Sustainability Program logo.

Conferences, courses, and meetings

- *Fight against climate change*: through energy efficiency measures and by promoting and facilitating sustainable mobility.
- *Circular economy*: use resources responsibly, reduce the use of paper and single-use plastics, and apply strategies to minimize waste generation and increase its value.
- *Personnel*: ensure the safety, health, and rights of staff, fostering a diverse and inclusive workplace with fair and safe conditions.
- *Transparency*: in financial management and in environmental and social impacts.

Research, development, and innovation (R&D&I)

- Ensure transparency and ethics in AEDV research, with clear communication of methods and results.
- Implement strategies to reduce the environmental footprint of dermatologic research.
- Support the development and dissemination of eco-friendly and socially responsible technologies and dermatologic treatments, reinforcing the ethical duty to minimize the use of animals in testing and other scientific procedures.
- Assess how climate change affects dermatologic health, with special focus on preventing and treating skin cancer.
- Promote the transition toward more efficient digital processes, while ensuring data protection, cybersecurity, and the responsible use of technological resources.

Awareness and advocacy

- Integrate environmental, social, and governance (ESG) criteria into the AEDV's structure and operations to strengthen sustainability and organizational responsibility.
- Maintain open and transparent communication regarding sustainability actions and progress.

- Promote understanding and implementation of sustainable practices in dermatology, highlighting their relevance for the profession and for patient care.
- Foster interdisciplinary collaboration to enrich dermatologic research and practice with innovative, sustainability-focused perspectives and solutions.

From these objectives, multiple action plans and indicators have been established to allow evaluation – for example, reducing waste and emissions at our events, launching sustainability awareness campaigns, supporting projects analyzing the impact of climate change on skin diseases, and collaborating with companies or NGOs that protect biodiversity or fight against animal testing. More than 50 initiatives have been defined to achieve these goals.

All of this represents a major effort requiring the active participation of the AEDV Board, members, and staff. To this end, a Sustainability Committee has been formed, bringing together volunteers from these three groups. However, achieving this ambitious plan also requires strategic collaboration with our stakeholders: the pharmaceutical and cosmetics industries, with which we create projects benefiting patients and society; other national and international scientific societies, with which we organize congresses, courses, and meetings; and health authorities, which establish the necessary legal and regulatory frameworks.

Only through cooperation with all these partners – and with the commitment of dermatologists – will we achieve the objectives that truly make a difference.

References

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