

Primary care medical centers in Switzerland:



How to reduce their carbon footprint?

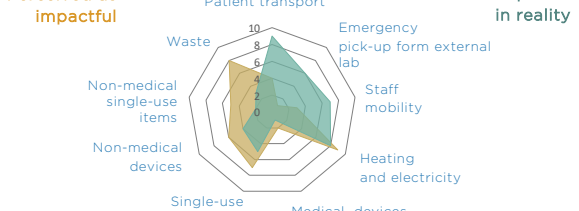
Healthcare is known to contribute between 1-5% of total global environmental impact, 4.4% if the total contribution on greenhouse gases emissions alone*. Reduction of the primary care practice carbon footprint could contribute to decreasing global carbon emissions. This study analyse the origin of the CO₂ emission for the primary healthcare sector in Switzerland and proposes solutions to reduce them by a factor 10. The Functional Unit [FU] for the study is considered one consultation.

*Lenzen, Manfred, et al. "The Environmental Footprint of Health Care: A Global Assessment." The Lancet Planetary Health, vol. 4, no. 7, July 2020, pp. e271-e279

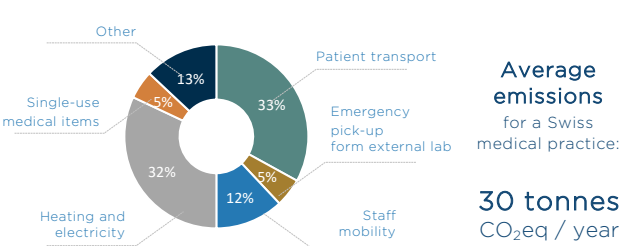


What is the carbon footprint of family doctors' practices?

There is a significant difference between doctors' perception of what is impactful activity and the reality of what is indeed harmful for the environment.

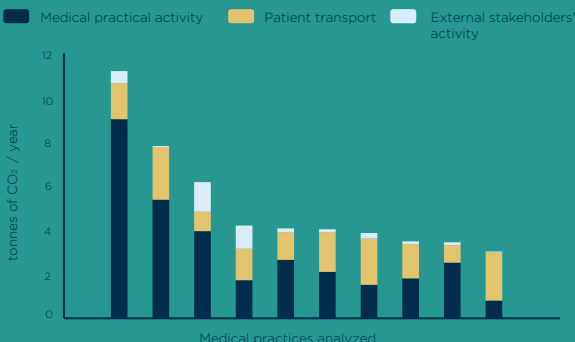


The higher environmental impact is caused by the transport, heating and electricity. These factors can all be improved without compromising the quality of medical care.



What is the potential for improvement?

Among the 10 Swiss medical practices analyzed there is a substantial difference in terms of environmental impact across 3 major sectors.



A hypothetical practice, conceived with the most efficient management produces 10 times less CO₂ eq than the one with the worst management. There is a great potential for improvement.



What is the action plan?

There is a range of possible actions that could be done on the management which provide a quantitative (measurable) improvement. The priorities are:

- Optimize the use of the office space

A significant share of the medical personnel in Switzerland works part-time. Leaving heated rooms empty should be avoided, it is better to organize the shifts in a way that the rooms are always used. This will allow a reduction in CO₂ emission of 5.8 tonnes.
- Urge the staff to use public or eco-friendly transport

Reducing the use of the car by 80% among employees would save 3.7 tonnes of CO₂.
- Reduce the use of cotton-based bandages in favor of paper-based ones

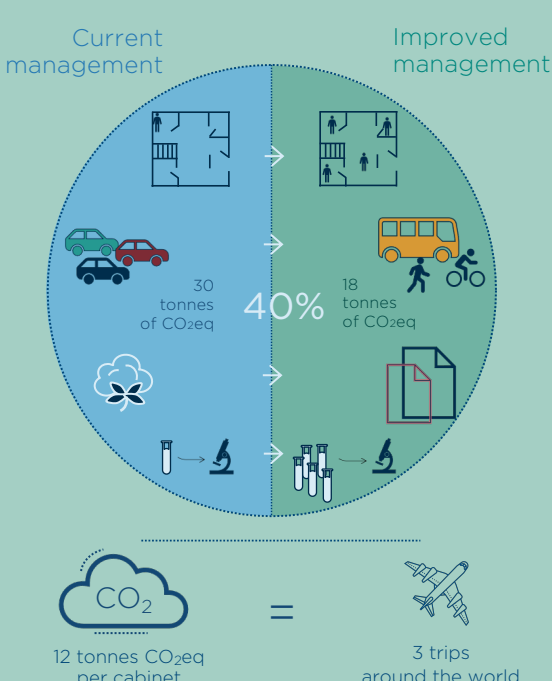
Using sterile pads made from paper instead of cotton would save 1.4 tonnes of CO₂.
- Optimize the use of the external analysis laboratory

Using the emergency run to external lab service for analyzing blood samples only for the urgent cases and optimize its use for the non-urgent samples could save up to 11 tonnes of CO₂.



What is the benefit of action?

If a medical practice in Switzerland follows the action plan just in the 4 aspects stated above, it would achieve a significant reduction in CO₂eq emissions without compromising the quality of care giving.



For more accurate information please refer to the full article**