



International Physicians
for the Prevention of Nuclear War



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Medical Journals Issue Urgent Call for Elimination of Nuclear Weapons

More than 100 medical journals, including the Lancet, the British Medical Journal, and the New England Journal of Medicine, and the Journal of the American Medical Association have issued a joint call for urgent steps to decrease the growing danger of nuclear war and to move rapidly to the elimination of nuclear weapons. At a time of expanded fighting in Ukraine and increased tensions in Korea, leaders of the global health community underscore that any use of nuclear weapons would be catastrophic for humanity.

The unprecedented call to action comes in the form of an editorial co-authored by the editors of 11 of the leading medical and health journals, the World Association of Medical Editors and leaders of the International Physicians for the Prevention of Nuclear War (IPPNW). The editorial is being released this week in conjunction with the start of the UN Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) Preparatory Committee Meeting and the 78th anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

“The danger is great and growing,” the editorial warns. “The nuclear armed states must eliminate their nuclear arsenals before they eliminate us.”

Citing the special responsibility of the health community, the editorial urges “health professional associations to inform their members worldwide about the threat to human survival and to join with the IPPNW to support efforts to reduce the near-term risks of nuclear war.”

It calls on the nuclear armed states, and those allied with them to take three immediate steps: “first, adopt a no first use policy; second, take their nuclear weapons off hair-trigger alert; and, third, urge all states involved in current conflicts to pledge publicly and unequivocally that they will not use nuclear weapons in these conflicts.”

The editorial also urges them to, “work for a definitive end to the nuclear threat by supporting the urgent commencement of negotiations among the nuclear-armed states for a verifiable, timebound agreement to eliminate their nuclear weapons in accordance with commitments in the NPT, opening the way for all nations to join the Treaty on the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons.”

“This is an extraordinary development,” said Chris Zielinski of the World Association of Medical Editors. “Normally medical journals go to great lengths to ensure that the material they publish has not appeared in any other medical journals. That all of these leading journals have agreed to publish the same editorial underlines the extreme urgency of the current nuclear crisis and the need for prompt action to address this existential threat.”

“The medical community needs to warn the general public of the enormity of the threat we face,” explained Dr. Arun Mitra, one of the authors of the editorial. “It is an integral part of our responsibility as health professionals.”

“We have to support the efforts of civil society organizations like the International Campaign to Abolish Nuclear Weapons and the Back from the Brink campaign in the United States,” added Dr. Ira Helfand, another co-author.