

Session 1

## **Climate, health care and the Race to Zero: A call to action**

Jan. 27, 2022 11 a.m. ET

In our inaugural grand rounds session, Gary Cohen, president and founder of Health Care Without Harm, issued a call to action to the health care sector to urgently reduce emissions to protect health. He highlighted how the [Global Roadmap for Health Care Decarbonization](#) can help the sector meet the goals of the [Race to Zero](#) – to halve emissions by 2030 and achieve net-zero emissions by 2050— and why clinician leadership is critical in meeting this goal.

He was joined by Dr. Beth Schenk and Dr. Rengaraj Venkatesh, sustainability leaders from Providence and Aravind Eye Care System. Both of these visionary health systems understand that reducing health care emissions is at the core of their mission to improve health and have signed onto the Race to Zero, committing to reduce emissions across all scopes in line with the Paris Agreement.

Dr. Schenk discussed Providence’s bold [commitment to become carbon negative by 2030](#) using their [WE ACT framework](#), and why environmental stewardship is an organizational priority. She communicated the value of clinician leadership and shared the work of anesthesiologist Dr. Brian Chesebro who led Providence’s efforts to successfully transition to [lower-emission anesthetics](#), achieving an 83% reduction in emissions and a 65% reduction in cost, resulting in \$1.79M annual savings.

Dr. Venkatesh shared the inspirational story of Aravind Eye Hospital’s [low-carbon eye care system](#) and how they are challenging conventions about surgery and demonstrating that surgery’s climate footprint can be decreased by focusing on patient-centered care, efficiency and decreasing waste - without compromising quality. In addition to [Aravind’s sustainability efforts](#), he also discussed a [waste and life cycle assessment](#) of phacoemulsification (a cataract surgery technique) finding that Aravind Eye Hospital’s carbon footprint is 5% of the UK’s footprint for the same surgery.

If you are interested in taking action to support the transition to zero emissions health care check out Health Care Without Harm’s [health care climate action site](#). Learn about opportunities to get education about climate and health from the [Global Consortium on Climate and Health Education](#).