

Do the Oceans really affect your health and wellbeing?

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Over the last 20 years there has been growing interest in interconnections between the oceans and human health. Microbial contamination of seafood leading to cholera outbreaks and other diseases, together with poisoning associated with algal toxins consumed with fish and shellfish, underpinned early concerns. This has been added to over time by numerous life-threatening chemical pollution incidents in the marine environment. More recently, the dangers posed by increasingly severe and more frequent extreme events has fuelled calls for mitigation and adaptive measures to protect the maritime population. Coastal flooding in particular has led not only to physical injury and loss of life, but also to long term mental health issues.

In this lecture, a critical assessment of the continued evolution of threats from diseases arising in the marine environment will be presented alongside a consideration of the benefits that can be accrued for health and wellbeing by the adoption of coastal lifestyles. As an increasing proportion of the global population move to live in coastal areas, how can we assess and balance the risks to health, where and how often will impacts occur and how will the development of coastal urban settlements affect health and wellbeing outcomes in the coming years? These issues, together with their implications for policymakers and politicians, will be discussed. Finally, the future of oceans and human health research will be considered with regard to the needs of policymakers, and for support of governance strategies.