

Go green and lead by example

by Pamela Wilson

GPs who 'green' their clinic can improve the health of their patients and make savings on their overheads, a leading doctor and environmentalist is urging.

Promoting the launch of the Australian Conservation Foundation (ACF) GreenClinic guide, Victorian GP and University of Melbourne senior research fellow Dr Grant Blashki said GPs were in a position to make a difference and lead the community in improving the environment.

"We do have the potential to lead the community on this issue"

"We are still very much community leaders and through our behaviour... we do have the potential to lead the community on this issue," said Dr Blashki, who is also the Victorian representative of Doctors for the Environment Australia.

"There are also a few ben-

efits to doing it... there is a sense of doing something positive for the environment and the potential cost savings."

Turning equipment off standby, using less paper and installing green power could lead to cost savings on water and electricity bills, plus lower stationery costs (see box).

Environmental factors had a direct and indirect impact on health, meaning doctors could play an additional role in improving the health of all Australians, he added.

"If you look at the health and mental implications of the current drought on our rural community, it is very clear that environmental change has a big impact on people's health," Dr Blashki said.

Meanwhile, climate change was also predicted to directly impact on the prevalence of mosquito-borne diseases, heat-related deaths and water-borne diseases.

The GreenClinic guide gives practical advice on how practices can convert to greener options and is available on the ACF website (www.acfonline.org.au).



Dr Grant Blashki: "There is a sense of doing something positive for the environment and the potential cost savings."

Making your clinic environmentally friendly

- Install low-energy lighting
- Buy accredited green power
- Turn off equipment. Leaving the photocopier, fax, television and laser printer on standby for eight hours each day will produce more than 370 kg of greenhouse pollution annually
- Aim for a paper-free office by receiving test results and communicating via email
- Limit pathology pickups and deliveries to a minimum number per day
- Ask to be taken off direct mail lists of pharmaceutical companies and other businesses, and insist pharmaceutical reps only give one set of flyers, which you can then circulate to all doctors in the practice
- Supply recycling bins for patients and staff
- Buy recycled toilet paper, kitchen towel and tissues. Have toner cartridges collected for refill or recycling
- Fix dripping taps and convert to a dual flush toilet. This can save up to 40,000 litres of water a year.