

I know I am not alone in disliking wastage and many of us will go to great lengths to reuse, recycle and generally think about our environment. I'm one of those whose mission is to save the planet one plastic bag at a time, so imagine my feeling of utter incredulity when I was told that the carbon footprint of the NHS is the same as that of the aviation industry. I feel I should have followed that statement with a line of exclamation marks to indicate my shock and surprise but, having thought about it, I'm actually not at all surprised.

The NHS is the fifth largest employer in the world with a workforce of approximately 1.5 million people and handles in excess of 16.25 million inpatient admissions and 89.44 million outpatient attendances each year. Such a large number of people are bound to consume a significant level of resources and generate a significant volume of waste, the question must be how much of that is absolutely necessary and how much is simply wastage that could be managed, reduced or eliminated?

In a safety- and quality-driven system that is run according to strictly defined protocols, it is not easy to effect change, but our healthcare and industry providers cannot escape their corporate responsibility and duty of care, not just to patients, but also to the environment. Everyone is urged as a consumer to rethink their approach to wastage and recycling,

ENVIRONMENTAL CONCERNS



It is the responsibility of everyone to ensure that the NHS is environmentally sound, writes Sarah May.

and simply changing to bicycles or electric vehicles for the transport of samples or patients is not enough. Green tokenism may tick a "feel-good" box somewhere, but to make a significant impact a major cultural change is required.

Environmental concerns are the responsibility of everyone and cannot be dismissed as only of interest to sandal-wearing cyclists. There is no single magic bullet and change will be best achieved by multiple small changes; change is both an individual and a collective responsibility. Could our profession be the catalyst that starts a new level of responsibility in healthcare; that of environmental responsibility? With such large numbers of people involved, even small changes can have a collective positive effect. Do we ever ask our various suppliers about their

packaging or recycling arrangements? Do hospitals have a committee whose remit includes environmental issues? If they don't, I think they should.

At a time when the aviation industry in particular, and our various transport systems in general, are coming under scrutiny for their environmental impact, our health service cannot simply adjust its caring halo and slip quietly beneath the environmental impact radar.

Sarah May
Deputy Chief Executive



Institute of Biomedical Science is the professional body for the biomedical science profession.

INSTITUTE OF BIOMEDICAL SCIENCE
12 Coldbath Square
London, EC1R 5HL
United Kingdom
+44 (0)20 7713 0214
+44 (0)20 7837 9658
Email: mail@ibms.org
Web: www.ibms.org

PRESIDENT
Alison Geddis CSci FIBMS

CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Jill Rodney

DEPUTY CHIEF EXECUTIVE
Sarah May CSci FIBMS

EXECUTIVE HEAD OF EDUCATION
Alan Wainwright CSci FIBMS

EXECUTIVE HEAD OF MARKETING AND MEMBERSHIP
Lynda Rigby

EDUCATION AND TRAINING
education@ibms.org

EXAMINATIONS
examinations@ibms.org

MEMBERSHIP
mc@ibms.org

CHARTERED SCIENTIST
chartered@ibms.org

FOLLOW THE INSTITUTE

Join us on
[facebook.com/
biomedicalscience](https://facebook.com/biomedicalscience)

Follow us on Twitter
[@IBMSscience](https://twitter.com/IBMSscience)

Find us on
[LinkedIn](https://www.linkedin.com/company/ibms)