Robin, Responded on 11/11/2019 (day survey sent out)
Thank you so much to the Alliance for inviting me to reflect on the issue of climate change, it’s effect on mental health, and the role of the APA in these concerns, as I run for Trustee-at-Large.
So, before addressing your specific questions, let me start by directing members of the Alliance to my election webpage that goes over my major platforms, and tells you more about me and my qualifications for Board Membership as a Trustee-at-Large: VoteKomradAPA.com

Now, to your questions,

Ø What is your understanding of the ways in which climate change impacts mental health?

• Catastrophic weather, fires, and floods are causing tremendous losses of property, treasure, and even life. Occurring on increasingly large scales, these traumas pose enormous stresses on individuals. Epidemiological research has shown correlation between climate disasters and emerging mental health problems in exposed populations, with effects that are often long term. Marked increases in depression, suicide, and PTSD have been demonstrated in the aftermath of major climate disasters; also increased violence, aggression, divorce and job loss.
• Those with existing mental illnesses are particularly vulnerable to climate-related factors. For example, some of the extreme heat that we have been seeing, hits those on psychotropic medication more severely. Moreover, those with severe and persistent mental illness are less likely to have air conditioning, or be willing to access relief centers.
• The kinds of massive displacements that occur during climate catastrophes can cripple existing mental health services, access to pharmacies and medication supplies, impair mobility, and markedly disrupt social support systems—all of which are already stretched thin for our patients anyway in some areas.

Ø How important are the public health and mental health impacts of environment and climate changes to the APA? Where would you place these in the hierarchy of issues APA should address and how do you see the APA engaging in these issues?

• The consciousness of climate change as a factor in public and individual mental health is lately beginning to emerge in the APA Assembly as reflected in several action papers. This very session includes Action Papers to ask the APA to scrupulously inventory its own carbon footprint, and a
recommendation that the APA sign on to the U.S. Call to Action on Climate, Health and Equity.

- When it comes to public mental health, **climate change is among the top 10 issues on which the APA should focus**, both in terms of a factor currently affecting mental health, and as an area of attention that has preventative health value. The same very vulnerable populations, like the poor, those with chronic mental illnesses, underserved minorities, and immigrants, are those who are at particular risk in climate catastrophes. These are groups towards whom the APA has long felt an extra measure of stewardship.

- The APA needs to make better use of its educational capacities to promulgate the research on climate change and mental health, and deploy its experts to discuss these issues. Interviews of experts, and even vulnerable people affected should be pursued, and put up on social media, the APA’s YouTube channel, and shared with mainstream media.

- Increasing the presence of climate change topics at the annual APA meetings, as well as encouraging residents to research these issues and make poster and workshop presentations, will also be helpful. Cultivating understanding of this in trainees is especially important, as they are entering the profession at a time where climate change will be an increasingly central issue to consider in evaluation and treatment of their patients.

Ø **Do you see yourself taking a leadership role in promoting APA engagement with above and how would you consider doing this?**

- Acknowledging the importance of these issues, I do wish to include the consciousness of these climate factors in discussions among the top APA leadership, and promote the kinds of educational initiatives and use of media discussed above.

- Knowing of your Alliance as a resource and reservoir of both interest and expertise is valuable. More actions initiated by the Assembly are likely to develop, as some of your members serve on the Assembly, and these will be introduced into Board proceedings. Having collaborations with your members will help guide my thinking and efforts on the Board.

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