It was just little over a year ago that Hurricane Maria killed nearly 3,000 people, displaced tens of thousands more, and left parts of Puerto Rico without electricity for months. But the storm’s devastation has also had far-reaching consequences for health care on the U.S. mainland.

A year after Maria, hospitals and paramedics continue to struggle with a shortage of saline and IV bags because of the damage caused to pharmaceutical manufacturing facilities in the U.S. territory. Dr. Suellen Breakey and Dr. Patrice Nicholas, faculty members in the MGH Institute’s School of Nursing, learned how the shortages are affecting the public while exploring the connection between climate change and public health. Their efforts resulted in several publications, including a paper they wrote last year for the *Journal of Nursing Scholarship*, that address the fact that those who contribute least to global warming are disproportionately affected by the negative health outcomes of climate change.

It was their expertise, along with that of fellow nursing faculty Dr. Inge Corless (who was a co-author with Breakey and Nicholas of the textbook *Global Health Nursing in the 21st Century*) and Dr. Eleanor Pusey-Reid, that spurred the Center’s creation. While other colleges have created centers in public health departments, this is the first climate-centered initiative in the county to be spearheaded by nurses. Faculty from the Institute’s other academic programs are encouraged to participate in efforts aimed at addressing the health consequences of climate change.

“Nurses play a key role in teaching wellness and preventative care,” said Dr. Leslie Neal-Boylan, the chairperson of its steering committee and the associate dean for Academic Affairs and Program Innovation in the School of Nursing. “It made sense to build on this expertise and give the Institute a voice in the global dialogue about health and the environment. It’s a chance for us to make an impact with the world’s most pressing problem.”

“A deterioration in physical and mental health, a shortage of food and water supplies, a breakdown in safety and security, and the spreading of diseases are among the effects already negatively affecting millions of people,” said Nicholas. For example, she cited that farm workers in parts of the world that consistently are exposed to oppressive heat and little rainfall experience much more severe health problems. “Unless changes are made, climate change will continue to have adverse effects on people, especially those who are members of vulnerable populations,” she said.

Many health care professionals are unaware of how climate change will affect their jobs, Breakey noted, but the effects already are apparent with higher rates of asthma from air pollution and an increase in health issues that arise after natural disasters. “Nurses, and everyone else who works in health care, must recognize how climate change is making patient outcomes worse,” she said.

“The biggest hurdle we face is raising awareness about the immediacy of climate change. We need to reach people sooner, rather than later because dealing with this is something that can’t wait.
NAA Presents Two Student Awards at IHP Commencement

LOYD NICHOLS STAATS SCHOLARSHIP

Mirram “Mim” Huggard Scholarship recipient Debbie Mondesir, BSN ’18 (2nd from left), with Dean Inez Tuck (left), MGH NAA Representative Mary Larkin (3rd from left), and Director Suellen Breakey.

MIRIAM “MIM” J. HUGGARD, SON ‘31 NURSING SCHOLARSHIP

Loyd Nicholas Staats Scholarship recipient Ana Julia Medina Pilar, BSN ’18 (center), with Dean Inez Tuck (left) and MGH NAA Representative Margery Eramo.

NEW CHAIR LOOKS AHEAD

Building on the MGH Institute's core values of excellence and interprofessional education will be a main focus of Jeanette Ives Erickson, the new chair of the Board of Trustees.

In July, she replaced Dr. George Thibault, who led the school’s governing body for the past 13 years. Dr. Ives Erickson, chief nurse emerita at Massachusetts General Hospital, knows the IHP from several perspectives. She joined the board in 2009 (and was vice chair for the past year), earned her Doctor of Nursing Practice degree in 2011, and is an adjunct professor in the School of Nursing.

“I want the Institute’s Board of Trustees to continue supporting the IHP’s faculty and students as we work to further develop an environment that fosters respectful conversations where everyone can learn and grow together,” says Ives Erickson, who spent 21 years at Massachusetts General Hospital as senior vice president for patient care services and chief nurse before stepping into her new role in July.

She believes the Institute’s new four-year Strategic Plan will generate philanthropic support to continue its mission of educating the health care leaders of tomorrow. “The IHP needs to have robust fundraising success so that we can provide more student scholarships, advance the research agenda, and be innovative in the way we educate the next generation of practitioners,” she says.

Ives Erickson also supports President Milone-Nuzzo’s goal to further develop ways in which students, faculty, and staff can serve the community in better and broader ways. She says this community involvement includes grappling with tough public health issues like gun violence, climate change, and the opioid epidemic, and continuing the dialogue around diversity that has occurred on campus during the past two years.

PLEASE JOIN US!

Thursday, October 18, 2018
6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.
One Constitution Wharf

Featured Speaker:
Josh Kraft
Nicolas President and CEO,
Boys & Girls Clubs of Boston

Invited Guest:
Mayor Martin J. Walsh

Live Music:
Charlestown Boys & Girls Club Band

For more information about the Celebration of Community or to purchase tickets, go to: www.mghihp.edu/celebration