Nature prescribing in primary care: current practices and future prospects

Thursday, July 2, 2026

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We do not have any conflict of interest

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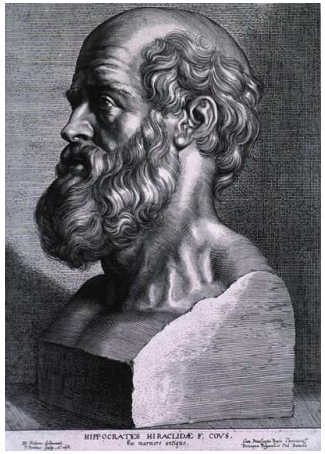
Introduction to Nature Prescriptions

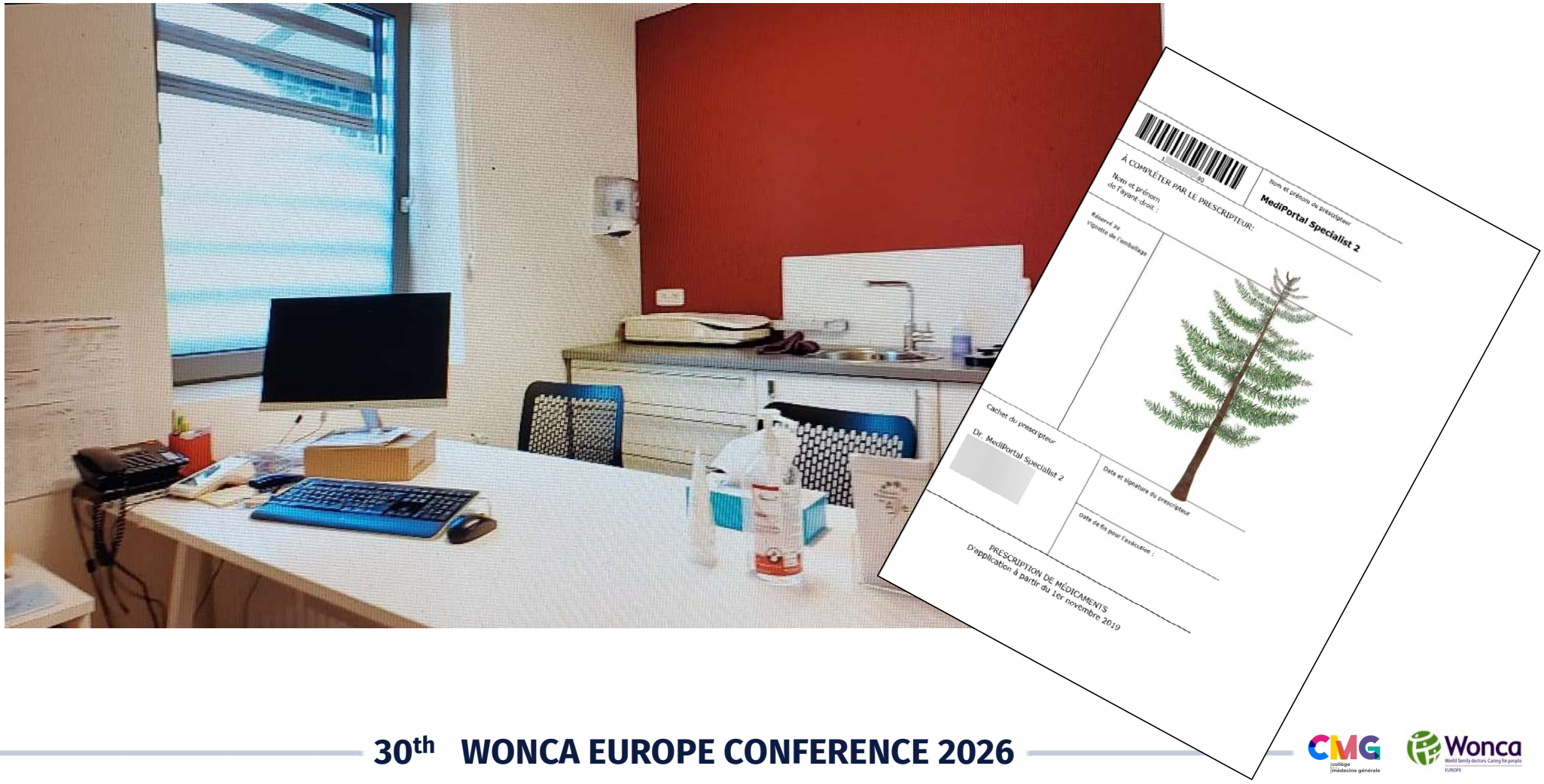


Hippocrate already knew…

"A doctor who does credit to his profession is one who takes due account of the seasons of the year and the illnesses they cause, the prevailing wind conditions in each region and the quality of its waters… "

(Hippocrates, *On Airs, Waters, and Places*, c. 400 BCE.)

Introduction to Nature Prescribing



What is Nature Prescription ?

Term	Definition	Examples	References
Green Prescription	Written script for **physical activity/diet** to improve health.	"Walk 30 min/day in a park"	Stanhope (2023)
Nature Prescription	Written script for **time in nature** (walking, gardening)	"Spend 2 hours/week in a forest."	Nguyen (2023)
Nature-Based Intervention	Broad category of health **programs using nature** (prescribed or not)	Green gym, care farming, arts-in-nature	Van Den Berg (2017)
Social Prescribing	**Non-clinical** referral to comminuty activities, including **nature-based**	Referal to a walking group	Robinson (2020)

Urban green spaces and mortality

- According to the WHO: green spaces (at least 0.5 hectares) should be accessible within 300 metres' linear distance of the place of residence.
- One study estimates that 43,000 preventable premature deaths per year could be avoided in around 1,000 European cities if the WHO recommendation were followed (based on NDVI)

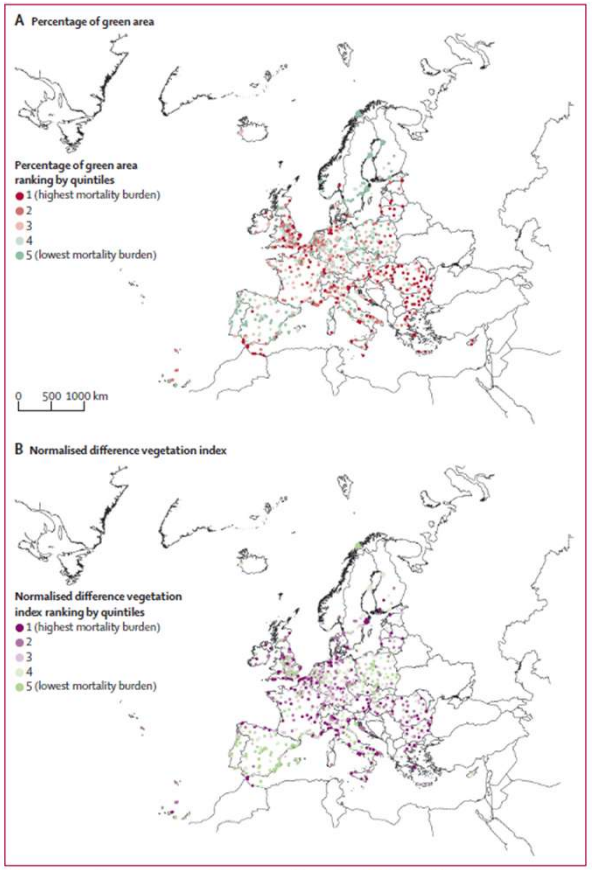
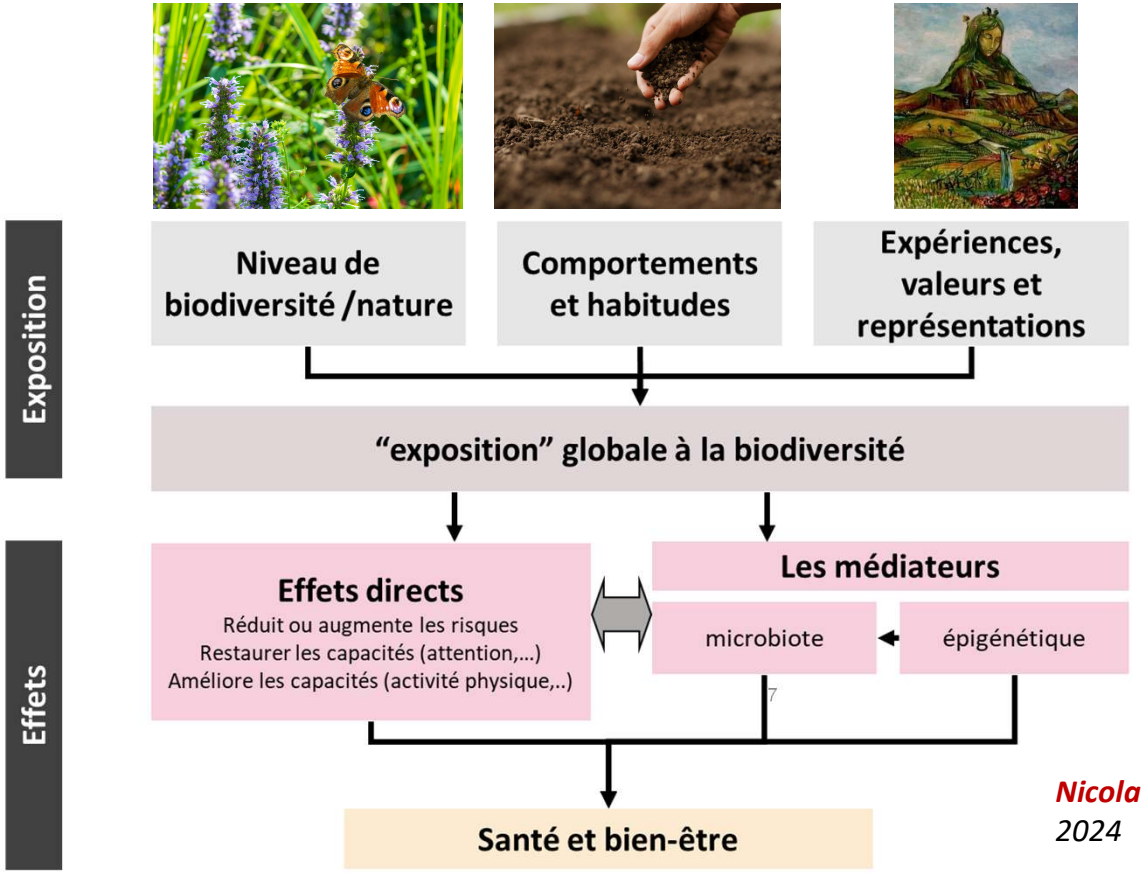


Figure 3: Cities and greater cities ranked from highest (first quintile) to the lowest (fifth quintile) mortality burdens based on the principal component analysis score

Ref: E. P. Barboza et al., Lancet Planet Health 2021

Biodiversity, nature and health



Nicola Banwell *et al., Public Health Rev, 2024*

adapted from Marselle et al. 2021

Credits: Wagner Frota

Can enriching the soil in nursery play areas improve children's microbiota and immunity?

'Day-care Centre Intervention': Part of the gravel was covered with forest soil (100 m^2) and turf (200 m^2) (study sites, n = 36). The intervention nurseries were provided with patches of forest soil, turf, planters for growing annuals, and blocks of peat for climbing and digging.

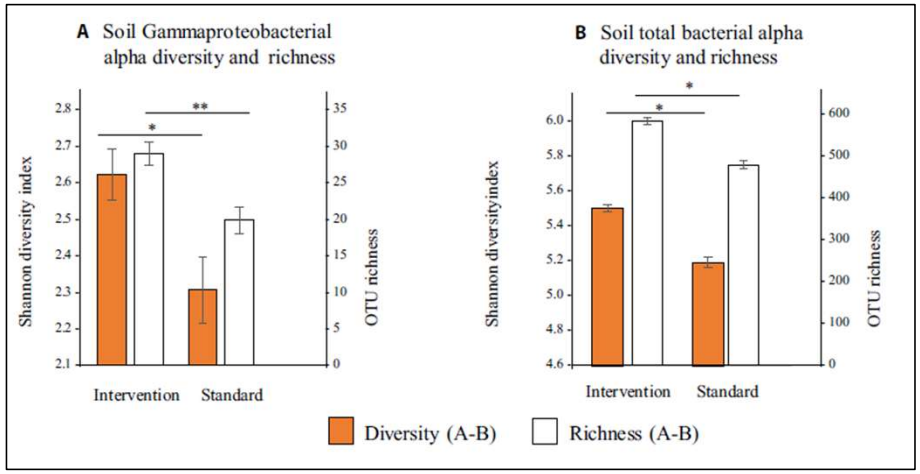
ENVIRONMENTAL STUDIES

Biodiversity intervention enhances immune regulation and health-associated commensal microbiota among daycare children

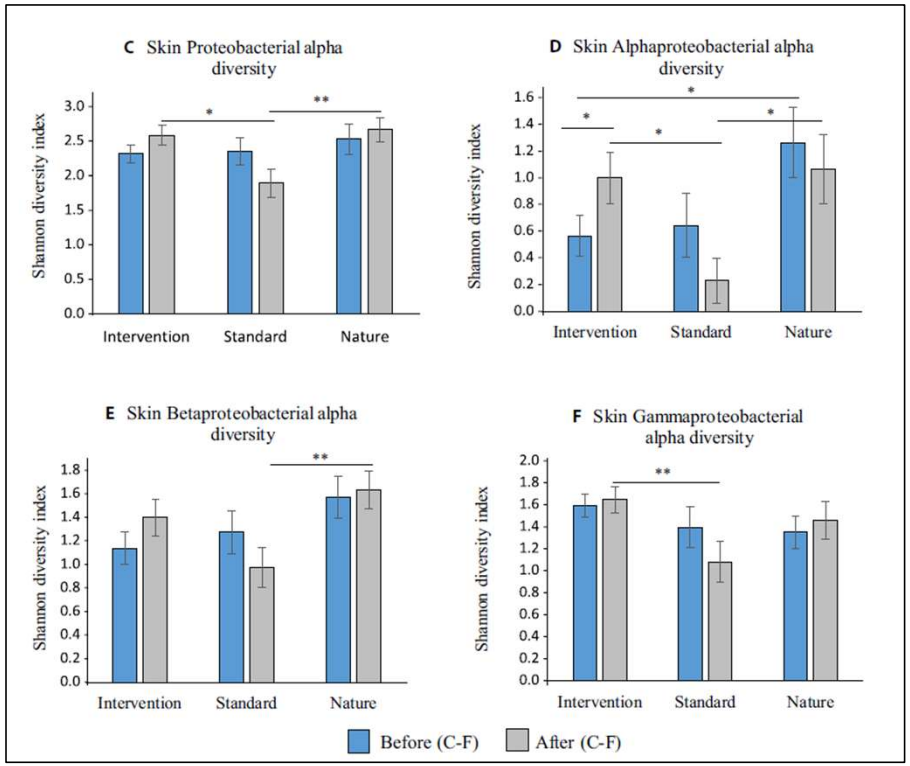
Marja I. Roslund[1], Riikka Puhakka[1], Mira Grönroos[1], Noora Nurminen[2], Sami Oikarinen[2], Ahmad M. Gazali[3]*, Ondřej Cinek[4], Lenka Kramná[4], Nathan Siter[5], Heli K. Vari[1], Laura Soininen[1], Anirudra Parajuli[1], Juho Rajaniemi[5], Tuure Kinnunen[3,6], Olli H. Laitinen[2], Heikki Hyöty[2], Aki Sinkkonen[1,7†], ADELE research group[‡]

Can enriching the soil in nursery play areas improve children's microbiome and immunity? (continued)

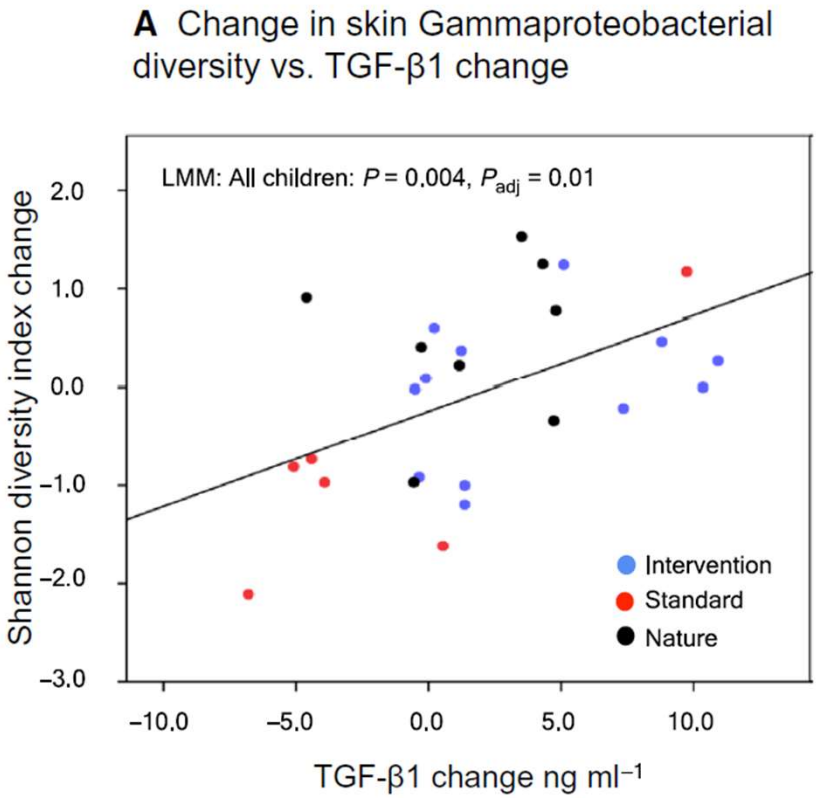
Soil



Skin microbiota



… and increases markers of inflammation regulation (in this case, Transforming Growth Factor–β1, TGF-β1)



Epigenetics

Changes in the expression of certain genes, without altering the DNA itself (this is reversible!)

Will have an impact on ageing (= **biological clock**) and the onset of certain diseases

scientific reports

OPEN **Greater residential greenness is associated with reduced epigenetic aging in adults**

Andrey I. Egorov[1], Shannon M. Griffin[2], Jo Klein[1], Wei Guo[3], Jennifer N. Styles[1,4], Jason Kobylanski[1], Mark S. Murphy[5], Elizabeth Sams[1], Edward E. Hudgens[1] & Timothy J. Wade[1]

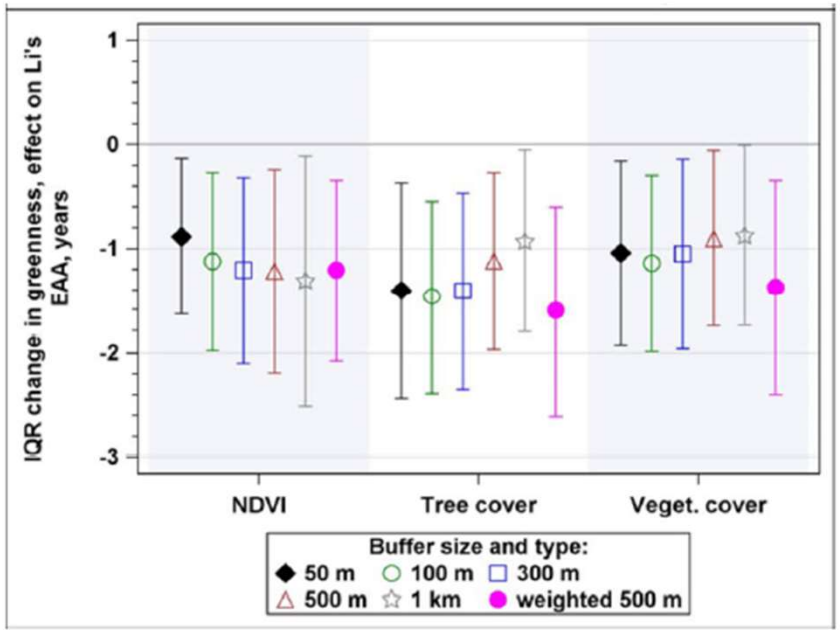
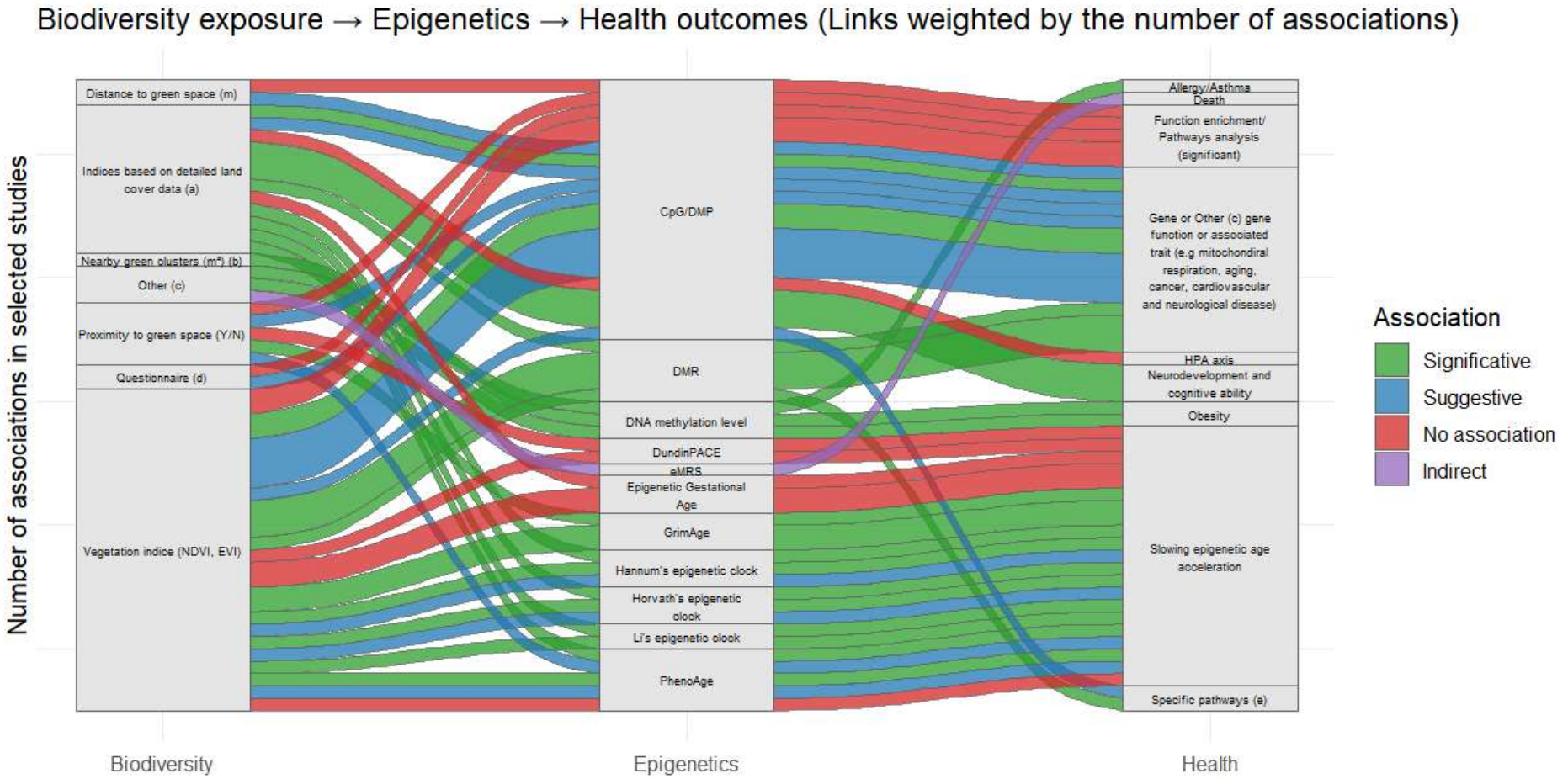


Fig. 1. Associaitons between greeness measures and EAA: multiplicative effect estimates with 95% confidence intervals adjusted for race, sex, height, WHR, smoking status, and two-dimensional spline of coordinates.

Ref: Fiuza et al. 2021

Greeness exposure and health trough epigentics



Ref: Belmadani, submitted

Overview of various practices around the world

Country/ Region	Main form	Particularity	By
Japan (1982)	Shinrin-Yoku/forest therapy	Sensory immersion in the forest, to combat stress-related illnesses	Healthcare professionals ; specialist centers
New Zealand (1998)	Green prescriptions	Prescriptions for outdoor physical activity. Chronic diseases.	General practitioners,nurses, dietitians
USA (2010)	Park prescriptions	Prescriptions for physical activity in parks. Initially to combat obesity and health inequities	Primary care providers
Scotland (2017)	Green health prescriptions	Structured programs, refferred by GPs. Nature Prescription Calendar with seasonal activities	General practitioners
United Kingdom (2019)	Green social prescribing	To combat mental health challenges and social isolation. National Policy (NHS)	Social prescribing link workers.
Canada (2020)	Nature prescribing (PaRx), Quebec: Prescri-Nature	PaRX: pre-filled prescriptions for nature time ; Prescri-nature: focus on equity and indigenous knowledge	General practitioners and other health-care provider

Let's start working together !

1) **Write a story about one consultation where you recommended/prescribed nature to a patient** (10 ')
   - A story! (not medical report!) -> set the scene and narrate the consultation.
   - A true story or a fictional story
   - In English or in French

2) **Share your story with your table** (15')
   - We'll provide questions to guide your discussion
   - Choose a spokesperson for each table and let's have a discussion together

3) **Plenary discussion: sharing key insights from your tables** (20')

Let's start working together !

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Form of prescription

Verbally/In writing

Content

Activity/Duration/ Frequency/Location

Patient's exp.

Health issue/ profile/effects

GP's Motivation

Clinical evidence/ personal belief...

GP's exp.

Feelings/role

Knowledge/ Practice

Origine of knowledge/frequency of practice/local or national programs

Relation with nature

Role of N in your practice/Nature-Health

Obstacles

Challenges/barriers/ Overcome

Let's start working together !

3) Plenary discussion: sharing key insights from your tables (20')

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Tools

- Currently **a lack of tools**, which acts **as a barrier.**

  Foley, Leach et al. 2023; Robinson, Jorgensen et al. 2020

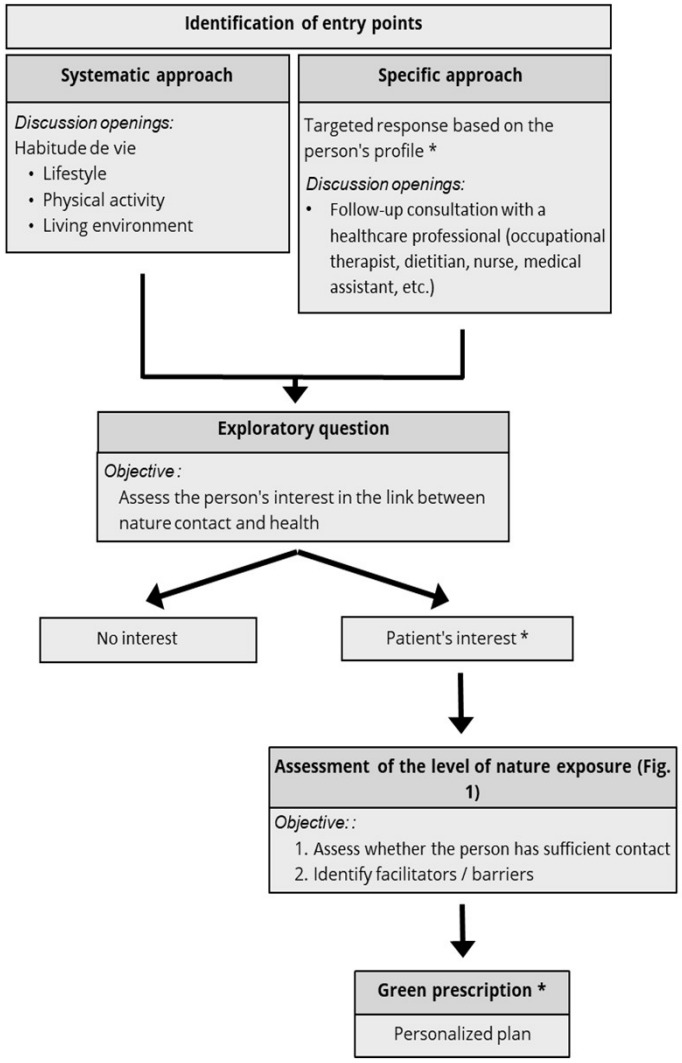
- Bringing this kind of topic into practice **calls for tools that are adaptable** and **usable in the consultation**. Enough for practitioners to **make it their own.**
  - With this in mind, the RMS article offers two draft tools to support the practitioner.
    - A reading grid to assess contact with natural spaces.
    - A decision algorithm showing how to approach the topic, through to issuing a green prescription.

Santé environnement

Comment explorer le contact avec la nature des patient-es en pratique clinique?

DAMIEN WAGNER[a], Pr NICOLAS SENN[a], Dr HUBERT MAISONNEUVE[b], Dre CHARLOTTE BRÉDA[c] et Dre ALINE SIGRIST[a]

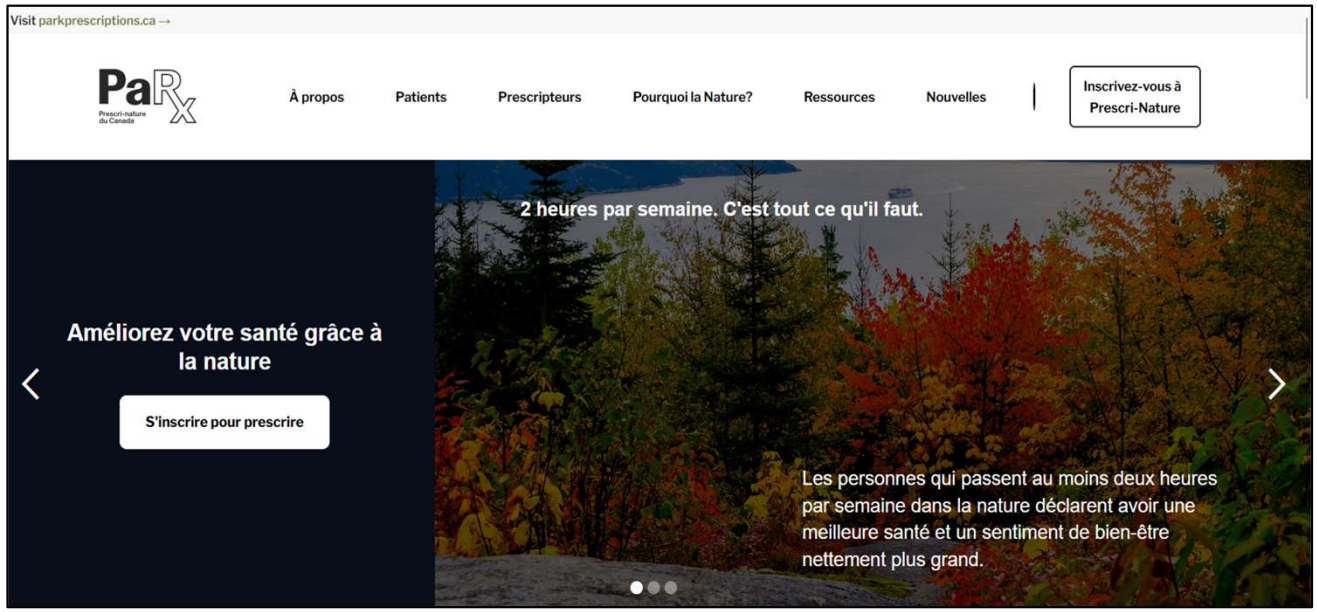
Rev Med Suisse 2026; 22: 1045-9 | DOI: 10.53738/REVMED.2026.22.965.48629



(Wagner D. et al, 2026)

- **Prescription Nature Canada** also offers evidence-based educational documents to give to patients.

- https://www.prescri-nature.ca/

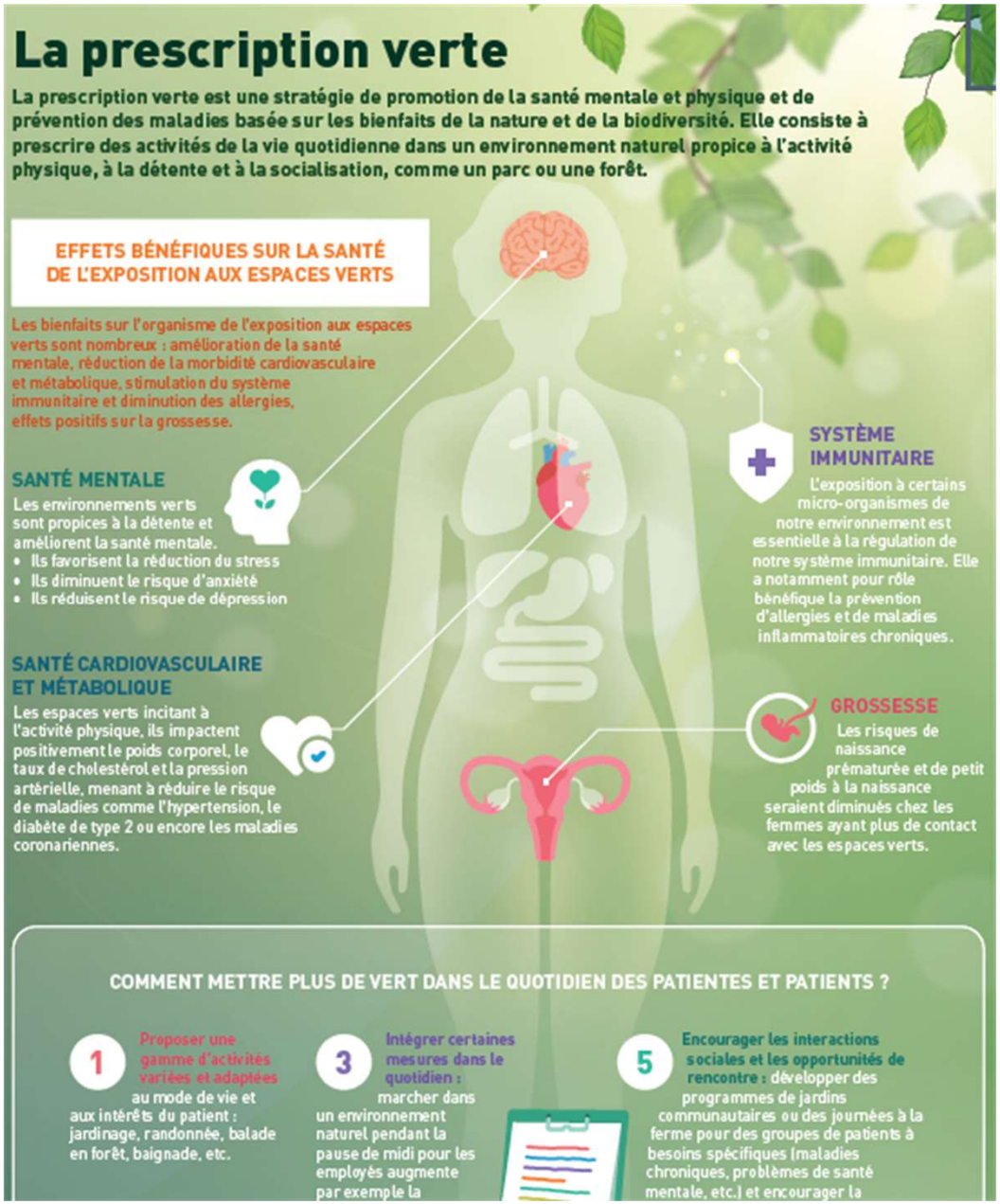


How much should I prescribe?

2 hours a week, 20+ minutes at a time. Research shows that people who spend at least 2 hours per week in nature report significantly better health and wellbeing. When it comes to the mental-health benefits of nature, science suggests that the most efficient drop in cortisol happens between the 20-to-30-minute mark. Hence our 20-minute rule.

What counts as nature time?

Health benefits start to add up whenever patients feel like they've had meaningful contact with nature, whether it be sitting on a park bench or hiking up a mountain peak. This makes the process of setting green-time goals patient-centred and self-directed.



Source :
Revue Médicale Suisse

Thank you for your participation !

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