

# Nature prescribing in primary care: current practices and future prospects

Thursday, July 2, 2026

**Charlotte BRED<sup>2</sup>** - Aline SIGRIST<sup>1</sup> – **Manon SCHWEICHER<sup>2</sup>** –  
**Damien WAGNER<sup>1</sup>** – **Nicolas SENN<sup>1</sup>**

1- Département Médecine de Famille, Unisanté, Centre universitaire de médecine générale et santé publique & Université de Lausanne, Lausanne, Suisse.

2- Centre Académique de Médecine Général, Institut de recherche santé société, Université catholique de Louvain, Bruxelles, Belgique.

*We do not have any conflict of interest*

**30<sup>th</sup> WONCA EUROPE CONFERENCE 2026**



# Agenda

01

## Introduction

Nature Prescribing ?  
State of Knowledge  
Overview of Various  
Practices

02

## Workshop

Writing your story  
Group Discussion

03

## Plenary Session

Sharing insights and  
Key Takeaways

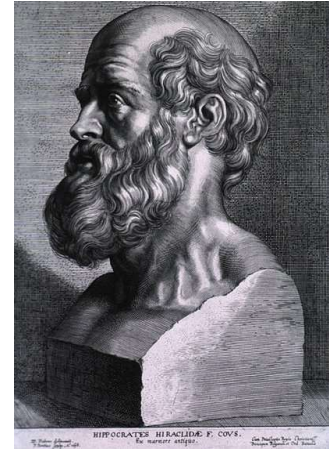
04

## Conclusion

Summary  
Next step

# Introduction to Nature Prescriptions

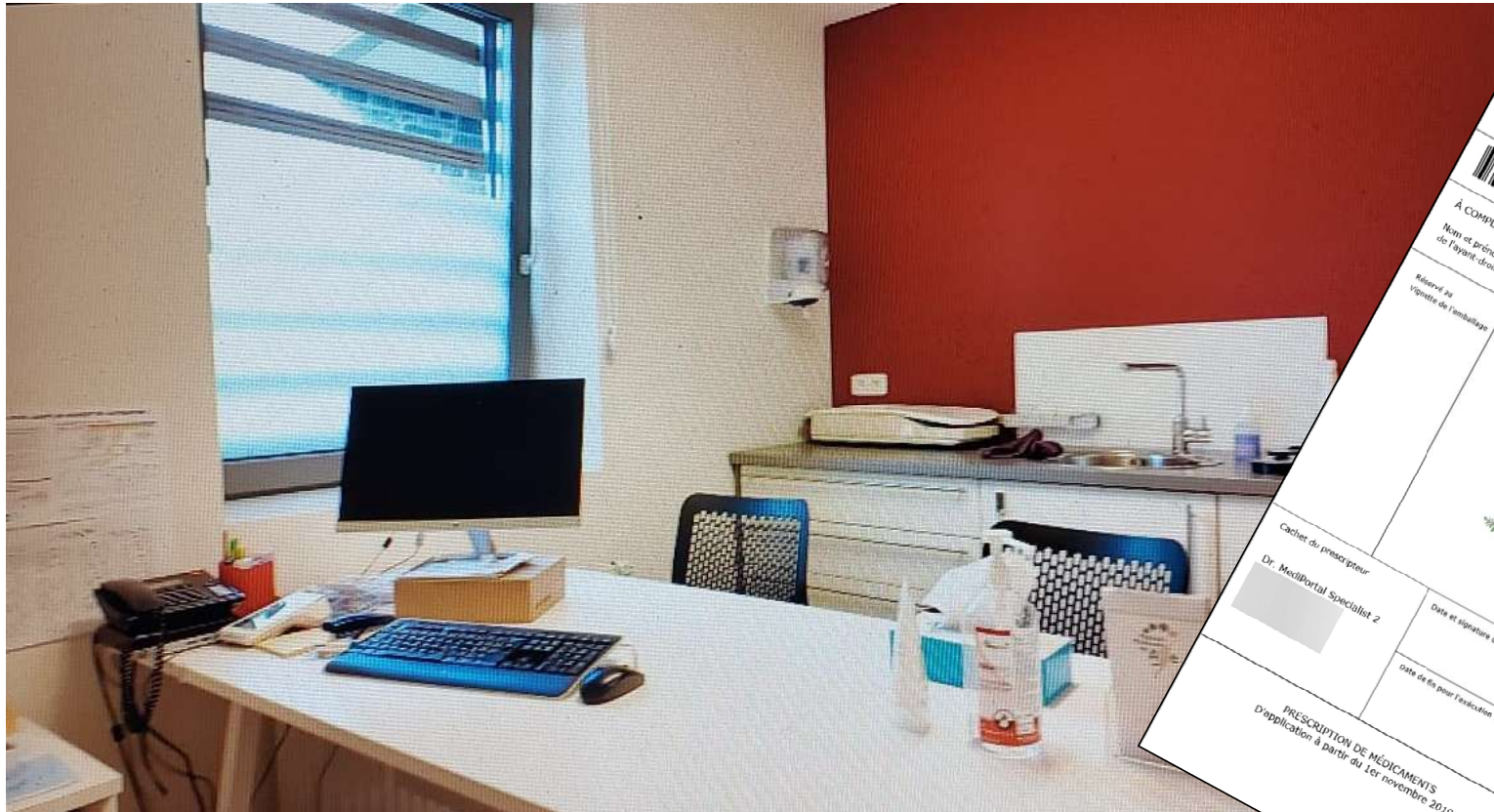
Hippocrate already knew...



*"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



À COMPLÉTER PAR LE PRESCRIPTEUR

Barcode

Nom et prénom de l'ayant-droit : **MediPortal Specialist 2**

Nom et prénom du prescripteur

Relevé de l'onglet de l'emballage

Cachet du prescripteur  
Dr. MediPortal Specialist 2

Date et signature du prescripteur

Date de fin pour l'exécution :

**PRESCRIPTION DE MÉDICAMENTS**  
D'application à partir du 1er novembre 2019

## What is Nature Prescription ?

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

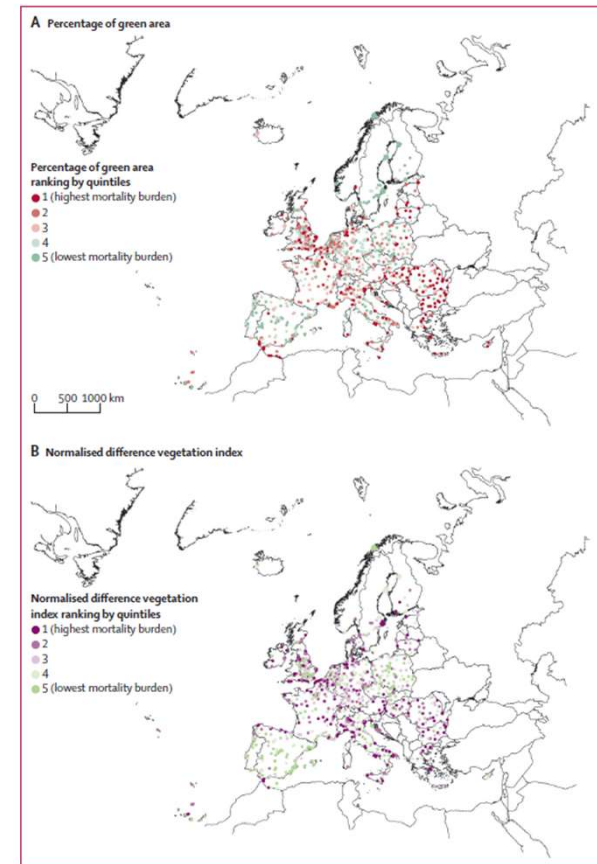
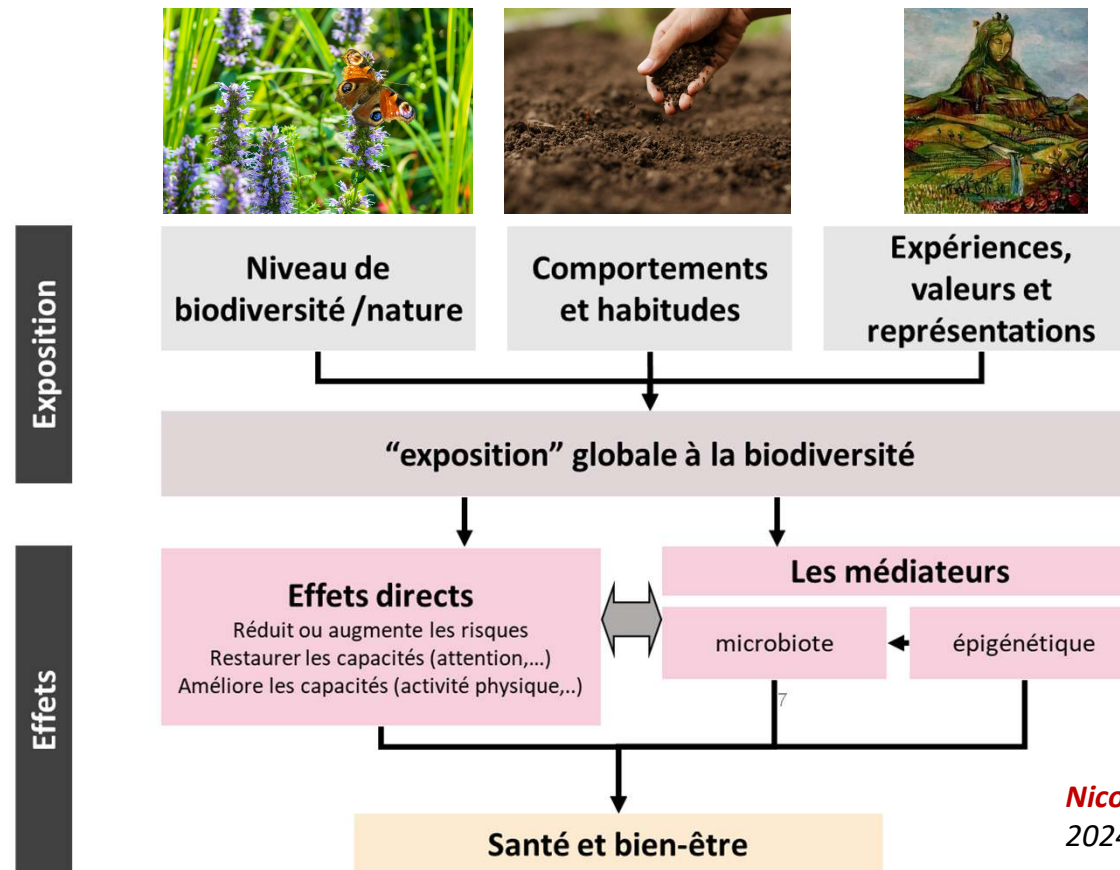


Figure 3: Cities and greater cities ranked from highest (first quintile) to the lowest (fifth quintile) mortality burdens based on the principal component analysis score

# 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<sup>2</sup>) and turf (200 m<sup>2</sup>) (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

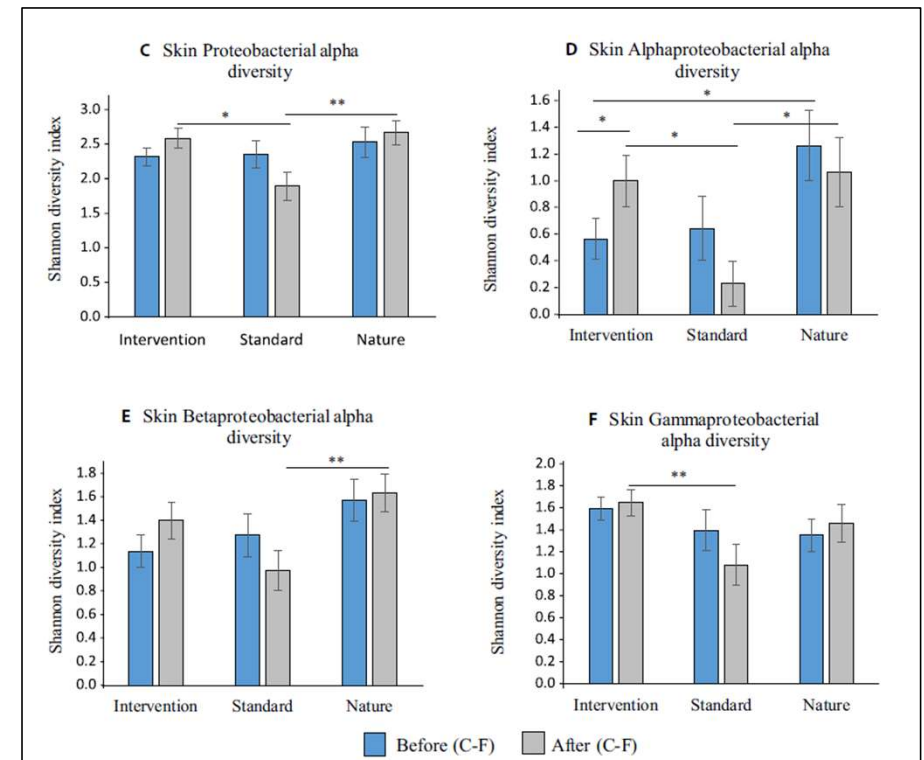
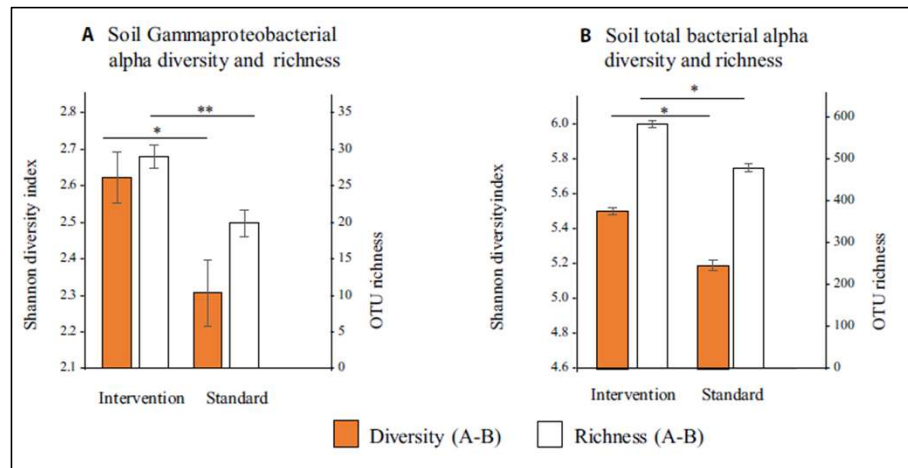
### Biodiversity intervention enhances immune regulation and health-associated commensal microbiota among daycare children

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

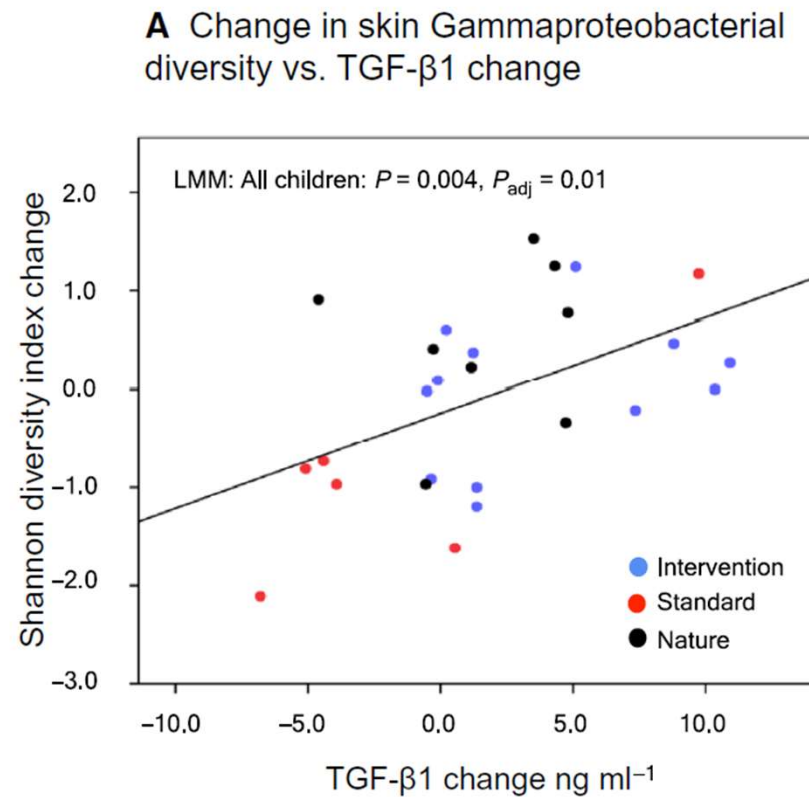
# Can enriching the soil in nursery play areas improve children's microbiome and immunity? (continued)

## Skin microbiota

### Soil



... and increases markers of inflammation regulation (in this case, Transforming Growth Factor- $\beta$ 1, TGF- $\beta$ 1)



# 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<sup>1</sup>, Shannon M. Griffin<sup>2</sup>, Jo Klein<sup>3</sup>, Wei Guo<sup>3</sup>, Jennifer N. Styles<sup>1,4</sup>, Jason Kobylanski<sup>5</sup>, Mark S. Murphy<sup>5</sup>, Elizabeth Sams<sup>5</sup>, Edward E. Hudgens<sup>5</sup> & Timothy J. Wade<sup>1</sup>

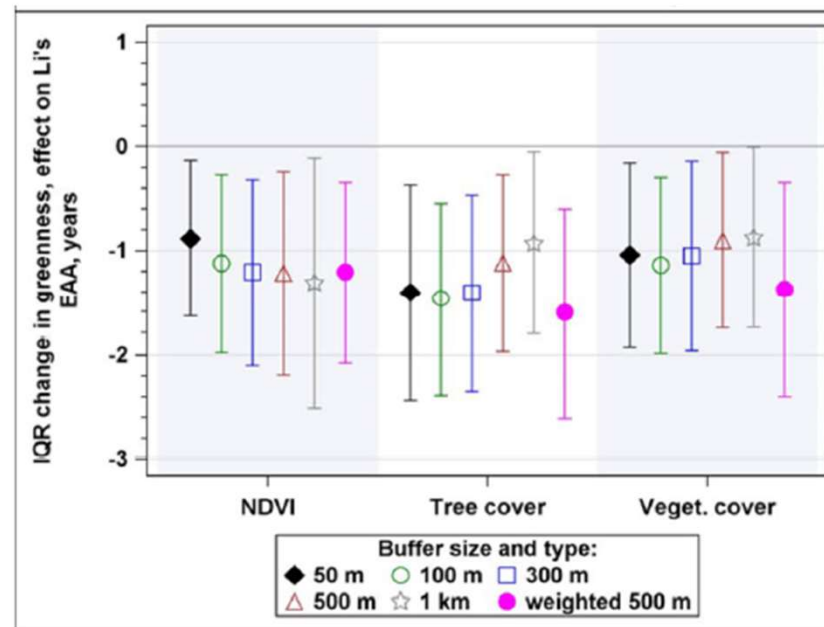
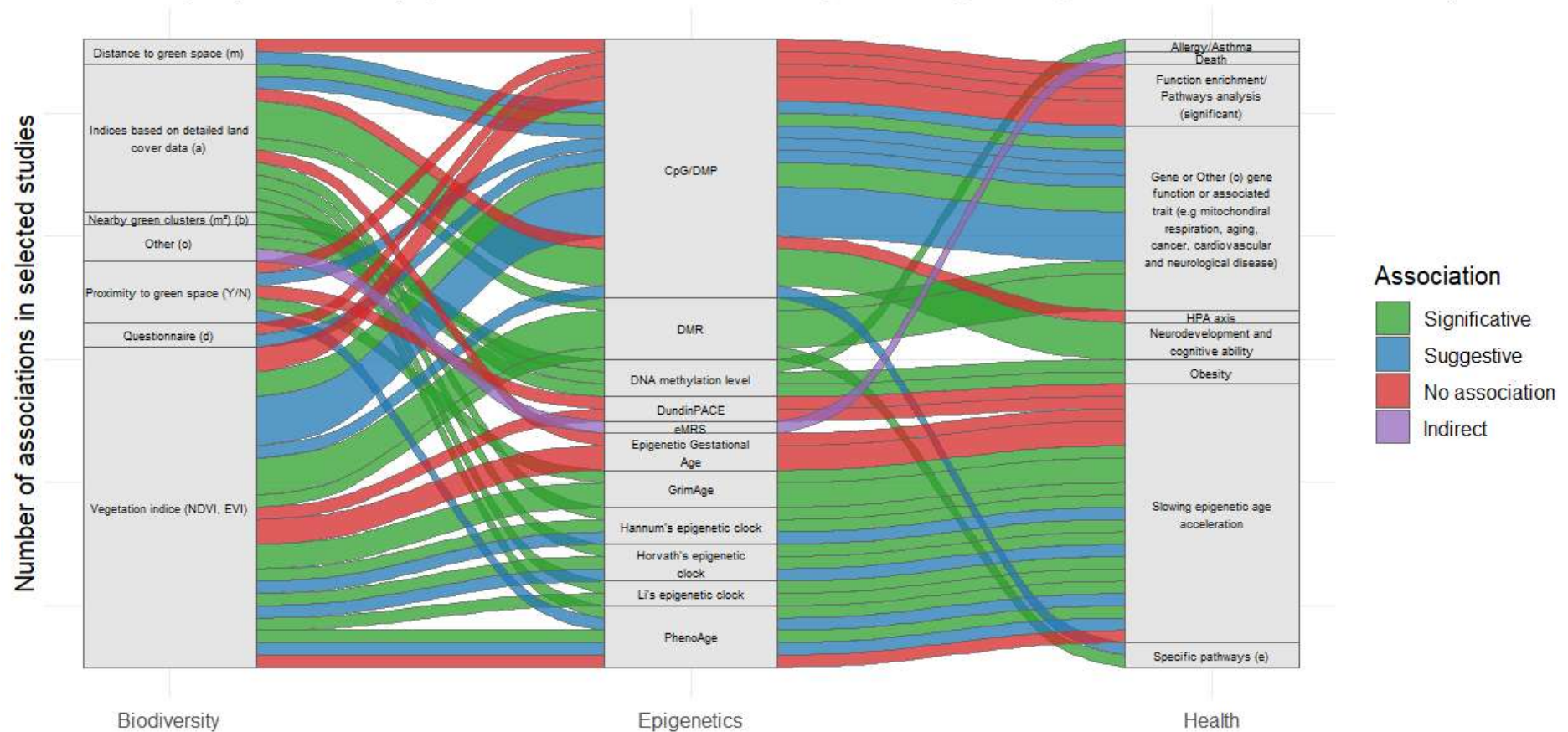


Fig. 1. Associations between greenness measures and EAA: multiplicative effect estimates with 95% confidence intervals adjusted for race, sex, height, WHR, smoking status, and two-dimensional spline of coordinates.

# Greenness exposure and health through epigenetics

Biodiversity exposure → Epigenetics → Health outcomes (Links weighted by the number of associations)



Ref: Belmadani, submitted

## Overview of various practices around the world

| Country/<br>Region       | Main form                                         | Particularity                                                                                             | By                                                   |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------------------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------|
| Japan<br>(1982)          | Shinrin-Yoku/forest therapy                       | Sensory immersion in the forest, to combat stress-related illnesses                                       | Healthcare professionals ; specialist centers        |
| New Zealand<br>(1998)    | Green prescriptions                               | Prescriptions for outdoor physical activity. Chronic diseases.                                            | General practitioners,nurses, dietitians             |
| USA<br>(2010)            | Park prescriptions                                | Prescriptions for physical activity in parks. Initially to combat obesity and health inequities           | Primary care providers                               |
| Scotland<br>(2017)       | Green health prescriptions                        | Structured programs, reffered by GPs. Nature Prescription Calendar with seasonal activities               | General practitioners                                |
| United Kingdom<br>(2019) | Green social prescribing                          | To combat mental health challenges and social isolation. National Policy (NHS)                            | Social prescribing link workers.                     |
| Canada<br>(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 !

## 1) Write a story about one consultation where you recommended/prescribed nature to a patient (10 ')

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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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Overcome

## 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.

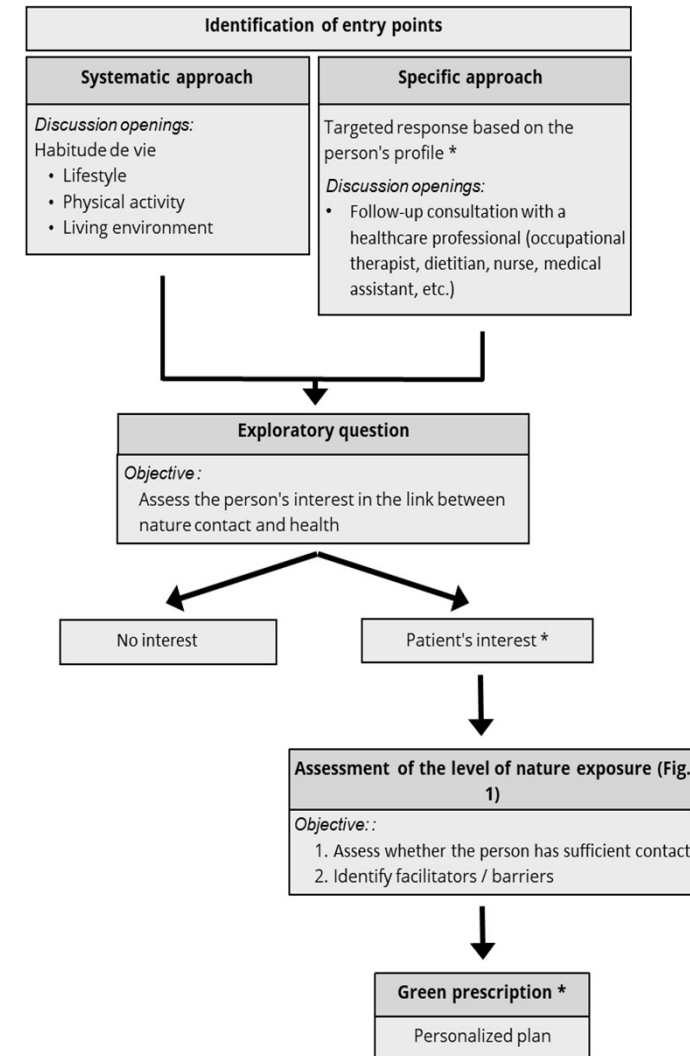
Santé environnement

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

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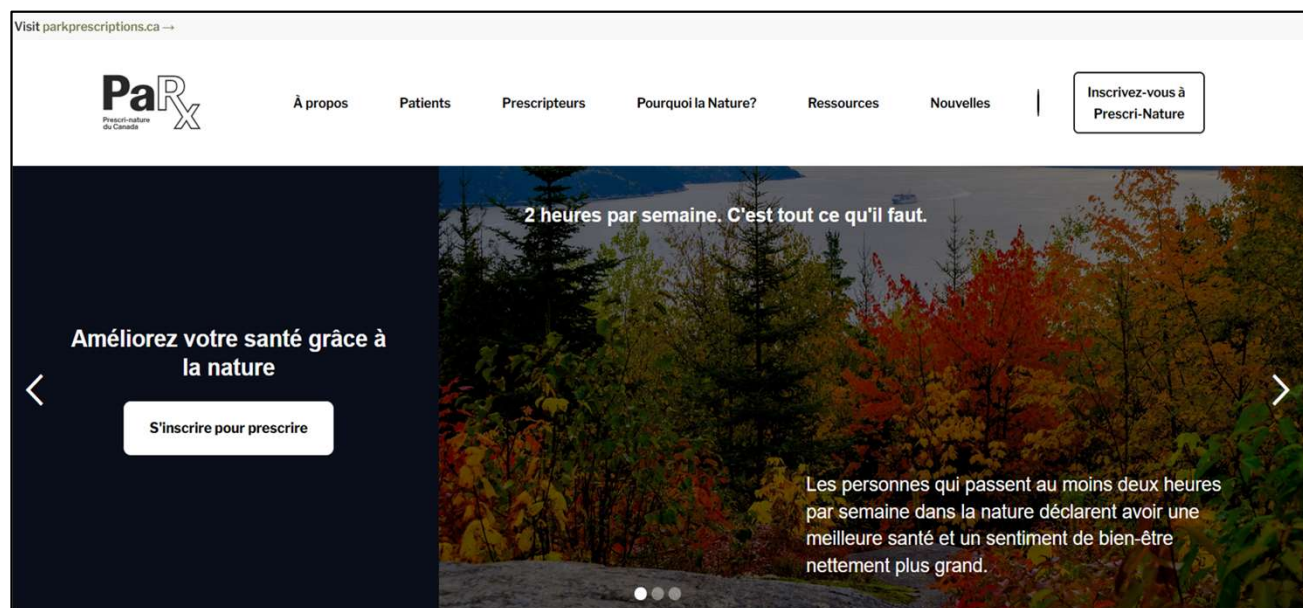
DAMIEN WAGNER<sup>a</sup>, Pr NICOLAS SENN<sup>a</sup>, Dr HUBERT MAISONNEUVE<sup>b</sup>, Dre CHARLOTTE BRÉDA<sup>c</sup> et Dre ALINE SIGRIST<sup>a</sup>

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(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.

# La prescription verte

La prescription verte est une stratégie de promotion de la santé mentale et physique et de prévention des maladies basée sur les bienfaits de la nature et de la biodiversité. Elle consiste à prescrire des activités de la vie quotidienne dans un environnement naturel propice à l'activité physique, à la détente et à la socialisation, comme un parc ou une forêt.

## EFFETS BÉNÉFIQUES SUR LA SANTÉ DE L'EXPOSITION AUX ESPACES VERTS

Les bienfaits sur l'organisme de l'exposition aux espaces verts sont nombreux : amélioration de la santé mentale, réduction de la morbidité cardiovasculaire et métabolique, stimulation du système immunitaire et diminution des allergies, effets positifs sur la grossesse.

### SANTÉ MENTALE

Les environnements verts sont propices à la détente et améliorent la santé mentale.

- Ils favorisent la réduction du stress
- Ils diminuent le risque d'anxiété
- Ils réduisent le risque de dépression

### SANTÉ CARDIOVASCULAIRE ET MÉTABOLIQUE

Les espaces verts incitant à l'activité physique, ils impactent positivement le poids corporel, le taux de cholestérol et la pression artérielle, menant à réduire le risque de maladies comme l'hypertension, le diabète de type 2 ou encore les maladies coronariennes.

### SYSTÈME IMMUNITAIRE

L'exposition à certains micro-organismes de notre environnement est essentielle à la régulation de notre système immunitaire. Elle a notamment pour rôle bénéfique la prévention d'allergies et de maladies inflammatoires chroniques.

### GROSSESSE

Les risques de naissance prématurée et de petit poids à la naissance seraient diminués chez les femmes ayant plus de contact avec les espaces verts.

## COMMENT METTRE PLUS DE VERT DANS LE QUOTIDIEN DES PATIENTES ET PATIENTS ?

**1** Proposer une gamme d'activités variées et adaptées au mode de vie et aux intérêts du patient : jardinage, randonnée, balade en forêt, baignade, etc.

**3** Intégrer certaines mesures dans le quotidien : marcher dans un environnement naturel pendant la pause de midi pour les employés augmente par exemple la

**5** Encourager les interactions sociales et les opportunités de rencontre : développer des programmes de jardins communautaires ou des journées à la ferme pour des groupes de patients à besoins spécifiques (maladies chroniques, problèmes de santé mentale, etc.) et encourager la

Source :  
Revue Médicale Suisse

# Thank you for your participation !

**Charlotte BRED<sup>2</sup> – Aline SIGRIST<sup>1</sup> · Manon SCHWEICHER<sup>2</sup> –  
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