



Photo credit: Tho Dinh-Zarr
County Donegal, Ireland, 2024

July is Plastics Free Month

Welcome to summer, and to the month of July! I continue to walk around my neighborhood, giving thanks to the abundance of nature so close to my house—two rivers, a vast trail system, and an urban park well utilized throughout the day and week by a population diverse in age, color, race, and ability. I am truly grateful for these proximate and accessible places of outdoor beauty. Yet, I am also keenly aware of the amount of trash and recycling in my neighborhood, most noticeable on Tuesdays, trash and recycling day. So many of the things that we need and buy every day come in containers, many of them plastic. Most will never be used a second or third time, and almost none will actually ever be recycled. In [“HOW PLASTICS ARE POISONING US”](#), Elizabeth Kolbert explores the “life cycle” of a plastic container, which serves as an important reminder of how important it is to decrease their production, rather than rely on the false hopes of actually recycling. July, plastics free month, provides an

opportunity for us to think about our individual actions as a consumer, and opportunities for collective action to change a system so reliant on plastics.

As it turns out, Ottawa, where I currently live and work, hosted the United Nations Plastic Waste Treaty Talks in April 2024, where my long-time friend, Dr. Neil Tangri, advocated for the reduction of plastic production. Neil has a strong connection to the outdoors, both personally and professionally.



Photo credit: Tho Dinh-Zarr
Neil at Rideau Falls in Ottawa, April 2024

Neil Tangri is the Science and Policy Director at GAIA, a global network of more than 1000 organizations in 92 countries working toward zero waste and environmental justice. He is also a senior fellow at the University of California, Berkeley's Goldman School of Public Policy. A climate scientist and oceanographer by training, Neil has campaigned at the local level for solutions to municipal waste, inadequate water supply, air pollution, and lead poisoning. At the international level, he has worked on marine plastic pollution, climate finance, carbon markets, inclusion of the informal sector, PVC and mercury bans, and an end to waste incineration. He has led policy advocacy campaigns directed at international institutions including the Clean Development Mechanism, the United Nations Framework on Climate Change, the Green

Climate Fund, the International Finance Corporation, and the World Bank. He has a PhD from Stanford University and holds a captain's license from the U.S. Coast Guard. Neil has lived in the U.S., India, the U.K., and Mexico, and speaks English, Spanish, and Hindi.

Reciprocal ecological and human restoration

Spending time in nature isn't only good for humans, but for nature too. Cognizant of this, our organization submitted a proposal with other groups on increasing reciprocal restoration (which sadly did not get funded). We wanted to continue to work with El Centro, a federally qualified health center in a largely Latino and low income neighborhood in Houston, where we previously worked on provider burnout. The proposal included providing nature therapy experiences for all 90 staff on a quarterly basis in lieu of scheduled staff meetings as part of their wellness program, as well as planting and tending trees on clinic grounds by the healthcare staff. In 2023, PRA provided indoor nature enhancements, including indoor plants, nature photographs, and digital framed photographs of nature. Based on positive feedback from healthcare staff and a desire to increase their nature exposure time, we suggested segueing from indoor to more outdoor-based experiences, hence, planting and tending trees. One of the phrases we used in our proposal was "reciprocal ecological and human restoration". In other words, planting and tending trees is not only good for human health, but also for the trees and natural areas surrounding the clinic. In a [study](#) published in the Journal of Environmental Psychology in 2020, Martin et al surveyed 4960 adults in England regarding contact with and psychological connectedness to the natural world. They found that "visiting nature $\geq$ once/week was associated with better health" and that "nature connectedness was positively related to eudaimonic wellbeing and pro-environmental behaviours." The authors concluded "that interventions increasing both contact with, and connection to nature, are likely to be needed in order to achieve synergistic improvements to human and planetary health." We couldn't agree more!

PRA is committed to promoting nature-based interventions, specifically nature prescriptions. In addition, much of our current work is particularly focused on healthcare staff well-being, and the role that nature-based interventions can play in existing wellness programs. And, we believe that a healthier and happier healthcare professional workforce that is psychologically connected to nature will be more inclined to incorporate nature based interventions into their healthcare delivery.

We want to hear from you!

With over 1,700 registered providers across the country, we know there are a lot of stories out there of prescribing nature for the first time and patient successes. Take a moment to [Share Your Story](#) and get a chance to be showcased on our [Provider Spotlight](#) page.

[Share Your Story](#)

PRA is grateful for your donation to help us keep our website and platform accessible to all!

[Donate](#)

Park Rx America is a 501(c)(3) charitable organization. All donations are tax deductible. Our EIN is 82-0856734.

Keeping in mind the secondary trauma of caring for others, please take the time you need to recover and consider a dose of nature for yourself.

Robert Zarr, MD, MPH

Founder & Medical Director

Stacy Beller Stryer, MD

Associate Medical Director



Sent with

Brevo