In October 2019, Ruth Eklund published a paper in the American Geophysical Union’s open access journal, Geohealth. This journal is dedicated to publishing work that provides insights on how to pursue a sustainable and healthy future for humanity.

Ruth’s publication, "Oil Spills and Human Health: Contributions of the Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative," synthesized findings from 32 human health publications from The Gulf of Mexico Research Initiative (GoMRI). After the Deepwater Horizon oil spill, British Petroleum funded GoMRI to investigate the consequences and recovery. The reviewed publications focused on the physiological and psychological human health effects of oil dispersants and oil contamination.

Not only were the immediate environmental and public health effects investigated, but also the recovery and improvements for disaster response and mental health.

The most vulnerable communities to disasters were ones that exhibited the most reliance on natural resources for their livelihoods. These communities are more likely to exhibit mental health issues, such as depression, anxiety, and alcohol misuse. On the other hand, communities with strong networks, such as faith-based organizations, can join together to address environmental and social problems.

Physiological health is significantly impacted by oil spills. However, it is necessary to equally consider mental and behavioral health to holistically capture the impacts of oil spills.