

## **Public Health: an Italian perspective**

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The health status of Italian population has been undeniably improving: the latest picture about the overall health level of Italians and the quality of health care in the Italian Regions shows an increase in life expectancy for both genders (now at 79.6 years for men and 84.4 years for women) and a decrease in the infant mortality rate, despite huge differences among Regions (in 2011 the infant mortality rate was 3.1 deaths for 1,000 live births).

These unremitting improvements represent an important public health success, but we still have risk factors and lifestyles that have not been properly addressed, such as the overweight and obesity, the physical inactivity, as well as the smoking and drinking habits especially among the youngest people; threats that we thought defeated and instead have returned strengthened, like tuberculosis; and new complex problems we have to be prepared to deal, like the multidrug resistant microorganisms and the effect of economic crisis on socio-economic inequalities.

It is therefore important that Italian Public Health will continue its intrinsic mission, to ensure the improvement of the health status of their citizens through the integration of different skills, from medicine to economics, from environmental to socio-political sciences and the coordination of distinct professionals, such as health care personnel, researchers, public managers as well as of the politicians and all the stakeholders.

This approach requires adequate investments that have been lacking in the last decades, especially in the field of health prevention and promotion, and a collaborative propensity to face these challenges with international efforts and policies.

This has always been the inspiration of the World Federation of Public Health Association (WFPHA) and of the European Public Health Association (EUPHA), from their founding to the present, as well as the life motive of the Italian Society of Hygiene (SIItI). Finally, the most important Italian and European annual scientific appointments in the field of Public Health will be carried out together in Milano.

The SIItI 48th National Congress will be held in parallel to the 8th European Public Health Conference, organized by EUPHA. A parallel conference has already happened in 2003 in Rome, and it represents once again a great opportunity to share experiences and methods used in different countries.

The two events, hosted at the MiCo (Milano Congressi), will be held during the opening of Expo 2015, the World's Fair that Italy hosts

from May 1 to October 31. Expo 2015 is the largest event ever organized about food and nutrition. Its main theme - Feeding the Planet, Energy for Life - runs through all the events organized both inside and outside the Exhibition Site. It is linked to familiar themes to public health experts and it will permeate widely the scientific program of the two events. The 5 Plenary sessions of the EPH conference, organized by EUPHA in collaboration with EuroHealthNet, the European Commission, the European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies and ASPHER (Association of Schools of Public Health in the European Region), look at the questions on the role of Europe in a Global public health; on people's health and wellbeing; on the cross border health threats and health care; on best practices at local level; and on the expectations on the public health professional in a global environment.

In the meanwhile, the main themes of the SItI 48th National Congress will be the health threats and equity, the connection between environmental and Health; the E-Health applied to prevention; the Food safety, food security and health nutrition; and the management of public health emergencies. These main sessions will be enriched by several workshops, round tables and parallel sessions.

The participation of the Italian Society of Public Health at EXPO 2015 is not limited to the organization of the two conferences: SItI is deeply involved also in other scientific events, such as in the presentation at the Italian Pavilion of Expo of the "Clinical Nutrition and Preventive" Manifesto, realized through collaboration of the main scientific societies involved in nutrition, and in the commitment at the experts panel about oral prevention during the Congress of Orthodontics (SIDO).

The Italian Society of Hygiene, founded in 1878, is the most important scientific society of Public Health in Italy. SItI aims to promote scientific and cultural progress in the field of Hygiene, Epidemiology, Public Health, Preventive and Community Medicine, and Health Management and Economics through the cooperation between hygienists, the health administration and national and international scientific medical institutions; the development of prevention activities and the support to health operators in central and peripheral levels; health promotion activities targeted to the population; and continuing education programs in order to increase the managerial, scientific and technical skills of their members.