



ANNUAL MEETING

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Session 3. The transformation potential of health promotion and prevention of NCDs: Where are we and where will we go?

Non-communicable diseases (NCDs) represent 80% of the disease burden in Europe, while 70% of NCDs are preventable. To turn the tide, National Public Health Institutes (NPHIs) need to extensively re-use already existing tools, as well as to develop new ones that are fit for the future. The transformative potential of health promotion is yet to be fully mobilized. Session 3 explored *old and new approaches and discussed how NPHIs should move forward together and improve population health*. It was moderated by Prof. Ivan Erzen, Scientific Director of the Slovenian National Institute of Public Health.

Health Impact Assessment as a health promoting strategy: towards capacity building in Public Health Institutes

By Dr. Liz Green, Consultant in Public Health, Policy and International Health and Program, Director for Health Impact Assessment, Public Health Wales (PHW)

The Health Impact Assessment (HIA) is a health promotion tool, mitigating and addressing non-communicable diseases in the context of global increase of NCDs. HIA is defined as a way of examining a policy, plan or project to determine whether it will have an impact on health and well-being, and, if yes, on which determinants of health, population groups and for how long. It is an essential driving policy tool to improve health, and for working with decision-makers to identify commonalities and benefits. It is a very inclusive tool that does not make a decision itself, but informs as well as influences decisions and plans. Therefore, it helps to maximize any opportunities of positive effects and to mitigate negative impacts.

Public Health Wales (PHW) is home to the world's first Health Impact Assessment Support Unit. It offers a range of functions, including training, learning by doing, advice, guidance and resources. As an example, *Dr. L. Green* mentioned an HIA case study commissioned by the Welsh government and PHW on the extension of free school meals to children aged 4 to 11. In terms of impacts, this study helped the Health Minister to approve free school meals and changes were made to the program's implementation. HIA is an excellent tool helping NPHIs improving health and well-being and addressing any inequalities to create healthier and fairer societies.

Connecting patients to their communities: the potential of social prescribing and the role of public health institutes

By Prof. Ivan Erzen, Scientific Director, National Institute of Public Health of Slovenia

Social prescribing is a health care approach, which involves connecting patients to non-medical services and resources in their communities to improve their health and well-being. Social, economic, environmental and lifestyle related factors have an immense impact on health outcomes. Addressing these factors could be as important as dealing with medical conditions. Social prescribing works particularly well for patients with long-term conditions, who need support for low-level mental health problems or who are lonely or isolated. It helps avoid costly medical interventions and builds stronger and more resilient communities.

In Slovenia, the first comprehensive health promotion and disease prevention program was launched in 2001. Ten years after, especially educated nurses replaced family doctors who initially ran the program with little success due to short available time to carry out preventive check-ups. Another step taken was the establishment of Health Promotion Centers in which topics such as nutrition, physical activity and substance abuse are addressed by a multidisciplinary team working with community partners such as municipal government, NGOs, schools and employment services. The Slovenian NPHI organizes the program at national level, manages the training of the Health Promotion Centers' workforce, and monitors the quality of the services provided. At a regional level, the NPHI is involved in defining priorities with municipalities and promoting public health programs.

Best practice portals in the prevention of NCD's

By Dr. Djoeke Van Dale, Senior advisor Health Promotion Joint Action on Chronic Diseases and Healthy Aging, the Dutch National Institute for Public Health and the Environment (RIVM)

As a NPHI representative, *Dr. D. Van Dale* is committed to using the best evidence and costeffective practices to achieve better health and well-being outcomes for individuals, populations and communities. The daily challenge for NPHIs is to make sure decision-makers and practitioners make the right decisions in an informed and knowledgeable way. Portals can play a role in increasing the transparency of effective and efficient practices.

EuroHealthNet's working group compared existing portals from various European countries such as Finland, the Netherlands, Germany, Slovenia, Poland and EU's Best Practices Portal. All portals seem to have developed assessment criteria. Differences between all of them are in the methodology applied to the assessment process, the classification and the designation of practices. Some portals collect and share recommendable practices while others try to improve the quality of a practice.

Best practices portal in the Netherlands started in 2008 with an assessment system for different domains as youth care, social welfare, sport and physical activities, etc. It improves intersectoral collaboration and promotes an integrated approach. It is important not only to possess a portal, but also to disseminate and implement it to have a real impact. This is a very important role for public health, in collaboration with the Ministry, stakeholders, local municipalities and research institutes.

Q&A Session

Prevention and health promotion interventions are often implemented by NGOs at local level. Participants raised the issue of using portals to ensure that structures that fund prevention programs at regional or local level with public money abandon practices that are not supported by science or evidence-based approaches.

Participants also pointed out the necessity of interaction and integration of Health Impact Assessment, social prescribing and the use of portals to offer best practices in NCDs prevention and health promotion.

Written by Philipine Colle, IANPHI Secretariat