

EUPHA-HIA SECTION'S PROMOTED ACTIVITIES



18th European Public Health Conference 2025

Investing for sustainable health and well-being

Main conference 12 - 14 November 2025

Pre-conferences 11 November 2025

Finlandia Hall, Helsinki, Finland

TUESDAY 11th, 9:00-12:30. Venue: Veranda 2

Pre-conference: Multidimensional Evaluation of Health Technologies: A Complementary Approach with HTA and HIA (HTIA)

Organiser / Co-organisers

EUPHA Health technology assessment section, EUPHA Health impact assessment section

Prof Chiara de Waure,

President of EUPHA-HTA section; Co-chair of the HTAi Public Health Interest Group, Associate Professor of General and Applied Hygiene at University of Perugia (Italy)

Prof Piedad Martin-Olmedo

President of EUPHA-HIA section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain).

Background

Health Technology Assessment (HTA) has been defined as “a multidisciplinary process that uses explicit methods to determine the value of a health technology [...] to inform decision-making in order to promote an equitable, efficient, and high-quality health system” In recent times, however, HTA has expanded its scope beyond healthcare systems, increasingly focusing on improving the health and well-being of the general population. This is demonstrated by the growing interest in environmental impacts of health technologies. Furthermore, an HTA could assess the use of green hospital infrastructures, which incorporates sustainable building materials, energy-efficient systems, and improved indoor air quality technologies. These innovations aim to create healthier physical environments for patients and staff, reducing exposure to harmful pollutants and enhancing overall well-being. HTA is also meant to consider spillovers in the assessment of economic impacts. Spillovers can be defined as impacts from an intervention on parties or entities other than the user. This calls on the importance of considering consequences for others. Other evaluative approaches, such as the Health Impact Assessment (HIA), could be relevant in responding to this need. In fact, HIA addresses how the different determinants could influence health outcomes through standardized methods, such as the assessment matrix, that makes it possible to map the range, nature and magnitude of potential, also unintended, impacts of a decision in the view of also finding mitigation strategies.

Based on that, HTA and HIA can be considered complementary tools that, when integrated, can provide a comprehensive framework for decision-making in public health and healthcare systems. While HTA focuses on evaluating the value of specific health technologies, HIA assesses the broader health implications of policies, programs, or projects, including those not directly related to healthcare.

By combining these approaches, decision-makers can address both the direct and indirect impacts of health technologies on populations and their environments. For example, an HTA evaluating a new telemedicine platform could incorporate HIA principles to assess its potential effects on health equity, access to care in underserved areas, and environmental factors such as reduced carbon emissions from decreased travel.

This preconference provides participants with a better understanding of HTA and HIA rationale, aims and methods and learn how HTA could benefit from HIA to have a wider and more complete evaluation of the potential impact of health technologies on population health and health care systems. Participants will have the possibility to engage in case studies that would be aimed at pursuing this objective.

Preliminary Programme

- 9:00 - 9:10 Welcome by Piedad Martín-Olmedo, President EUPHA-HIA, Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública, Spain, and Chiara de Waure, President EUPHA-HTA, Department of Experimental Medicine, University of Perugia, Italy
- 9:10 - 9:40 Introduction on HTA by **Chiara de Waure**
- 9:40 - 10:10 Introduction on HIA by **Piedad Martín-Olmedo**
- 10:10 - 10:30 Setting up the working groups and mandate description (**Ilaria Valentini, Floriana D'Ambrosio**)
- 10:30 - 11:00 Coffee break
- 11:00 - 11:45 Working groups (Odile Mekel, Ilaria Valentini, Floriana D'Ambrosio)
- 11:45- 12:15 Group discussion (rapporteurs from each working group)
- 12:15 - 12:30 Wrap-up by Piedad Martín-Olmedo and Chiara de Waure
- 12:30 - 13:30 Lunch

Registration

The registration fee is EUR 80. Networking lunch and refreshments are included.

WEDNESDAY 12th, 9:00-10:00- Room 21

Roundtable title: Advancing Policy Analysis: Integrating Foresight, Health Impact Assessment, and health economics

Organiser / Co-organisers

EUPHA Foresight section, EUPHA Health impact assessment section, EUPHA Public health economics section

Workshop abstract

Health policy analysis is fundamental to shaping healthcare systems that are both effective and equitable. It serves as a cornerstone for informed decision-making, helping governments, organizations, and stakeholders develop strategies that address population health needs while ensuring fairness and efficiency. However, to significantly enhance its impact, it is essential to adopt a multidimensional and integrated approach to policy analysis. By combining strategic foresight, health impact assessment (HIA), and economic evaluation, policymakers can more effectively navigate the complex and ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, thereby enabling more proactive, evidence-based, and financially sustainable decisions.

Strategic foresight, as a critical component, allows policymakers to anticipate the future. By analyzing trends such as emerging health threats, technological advancements, shifts in disease patterns, and demographic changes, this forward-looking approach enhances preparedness and supports proactive decision-making. Strategic foresight ensures that policymakers are better equipped to anticipate challenges. Health impact assessment (HIA) represents another vital tool in health policy analysis. It provides a structured and systematic framework for evaluating the potential effects of proposed policies, programs, or regulatory actions on the health outcomes of individuals and communities. What sets HIA apart is its emphasis on equity and evidence-based planning. Economic evaluation, as a third tool, provides critical insights into the financial dimensions of policy options, analyzing their cost-effectiveness, affordability, and sustainability. By identifying interventions that maximize health outcomes relative to available resources, it ensures optimal allocation of funds and long-term economic sustainability.

These three tools are often employed in public health policy analysis. However, which tool to use for which policy research question is not given many considerations, in practice. Also, they are often used independent from each other, while they could be complementary to each other. By integrating strategic foresight, HIA, and health economics health policy analysis can address complex challenges more effectively. This comprehensive approach fosters resilience, equity, and sustainability in healthcare systems, equipping policymakers to design strategies that improve health outcomes and ensure both social and economic value.

In this session, a brief overview of the three tools is given, including their strengths and weaknesses. Next, in a round table with the Presidents of the three different EUPHA sections, differences, overlaps and similarities will be identified. The session will end with finding common ground for setting next steps to further integrate these three tools to be better equipped to address complex policy issues.

Message 1

Public health policy making can be better supported by integrating different policy analysis methods

Message 2

As a public health community we need to collaborate more to deal with the complex challenges of the future

Chairperson 1 : Birgitte Blatter

Panellist 1: **Dr Henk Hilderink**

President of EUPHA-FS section, top expert on Population Health Foresight at Institute for Public Health and the Environment, Welfare and Sport (RIVM, Netherlands).

Panellist 2: **Prof. Piedad Martín-Olmedo**

President of EUPHA-HIA section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain).

Panellist 3: **Prof João Vasco Santos**

President of EUPHA-ECO section; Associate Professor. Universidade do Porto (Porto, Portugal)

WEDNESDAY 12th, 10:20-11:30- room 8

Workshop title: Promoting greener health technologies to support planetary health

Organiser / Co-organisers

EUPHA-HTA; EUPHA-HIA; EUPHA-PHPP; EUPHA-ENV; HTAi ESHTA WG

Workshop abstract

Health technologies (HTs) have a significant impact on the global carbon footprint. Recent studies indicate that the health care contributes to 4-5% of global greenhouse gas (GHGs) emissions which is comparable to the aviation industry. This is primarily derived from the health care supply chain, namely the production, transport, and disposal of goods and services, including pharmaceuticals, medical devices, hospital equipment, and instruments.

Environmental sustainability is intrinsically tied to public health and the overall well-being of communities. HTs, though aimed at protecting health, can have a wide range of adverse effects on biodiversity, the environment and ultimately human health if their ecological implications are not carefully considered. All lifecycles of HTs, which include development, manufacturing, distribution, use, and disposal processes of medical devices and pharmaceutical products, contributes to GHGs, chemical pollution, and waste generation. Therefore, intervention to assess the impact that HTs can have on the carbon footprint and the broader environment is a critical aspect that must be integrated into the design, evaluation and implementation of HTs from their initial conception. On top of that, addressing health inequities early on during HTs

design, but also in their evaluation and implementation, becomes even more essential in the context of climate change that impacts vulnerable populations, disproportionately. By including the assessment of environmental impact as an integral part of design, evaluation and implementation of HTs, a more responsible and holistic approach can be fostered, prioritizing not only clinical efficacy but also the protection of population and planetary health. Furthermore, this practice could support effort to achieve global objectives for emission reduction and sustainable development, aligning with international agreements like the Paris Agreement and the UN Sustainable Development Goals. Concomitantly, assessing environmental impact also drives innovation in green and environmentally responsible technologies within the healthcare field, promoting solutions that minimize harms and optimize resource efficiency. Ultimately, this approach not only mitigates ecological risks but also enhances the resilience of health systems in the face of emerging climate-related threats, such as disease outbreaks. This workshop would like to address these aspects, starting from an overview of principles and challenges for the incorporation of the planetary health perspective in the evaluation of HTs. More practical considerations will be followed in relation to new HTs and the assessment of their environmental impact within the health technology assessment approach. Finally, a case study will showcase the assessment of environmental impact of HTs. The final discussion will be conducted through the lens of the public health policy and politics.

Message 1

Incorporating environmental impact assessment into the assessment of every stage of the life cycle of a health technology is critical for a healthier planet and improved global public health

Message 2

New health technologies must be designed from their earliest conception with an eco-conscious, equitable and sustainable perspective that protects human and planetary health

Chairperson 1 : Prof Piedad Martin-Olmedo

President of EUPHA-HIA section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain).

Chairperson 2: Prof Chiara de Waure,

President of EUPHA-HTA section; Co-chair of the HTAi Public Health Interest Group, Associate Professor of General and Applied Hygiene at University of Perugia (Italy)

Presentation 1: Integrating Planetary Health in Health Technology Assessment: principles and challenges

Chiara Cadeddu

School of Health Policy and Management, Erasmus University Rotterdam, Rotterdam, Netherlands

Abstract

Planetary health is emerging as a crucial element when assessing health technologies, advocating for a transformative shift towards systems thinking to integrate environmental considerations and prioritize 'Planetary health for all.' This perspective recognises and suggests that the inclusion of a planetary health domain into Health Technology Assessment (HTA) can significantly enhance decision-making in health systems and contribute to addressing the Triple Planetary Crisis. By evaluating technologies and interventions based on their environmental

impact alongside clinical and cost outcomes, health systems can make more informed choices. However, the latest EU HTA regulation does not emphasize planetary health, and only a few HTA bodies, such as France's Haute Autorité de Santé, the UK's NICE, and the Dutch National Health Care Institute (ZIN), have begun to consider incorporating these aspects into their strategies and case studies. There is an urgent need for a coordinated European response to address several key challenges, including the absence of standardized methodologies due to a lack of uniform guidelines for assessing environmental impacts within HTAs, the limited access to comprehensive environmental data relevant to healthcare technologies, or the quantification of indirect effects like supply chain emissions. Integrating environmental impact metrics with traditional economic evaluations, such as cost-effectiveness analyses, poses challenges due to the lack of frameworks to balance environmental benefits against economic costs. Furthermore, there is limited awareness and expertise among HTA practitioners regarding environmental assessment methods, highlighting the need for updated education and transdisciplinary collaboration to improve understanding and implementation. To move forward, concrete steps must be taken to embed environmental considerations onto HTA processes and ensure these become standard practice in Europe.

Presenter 2: Decarbonizing Healthcare: Leveraging New Technologies for a Sustainable and Resilient Health Sector

Marija Jevtic

Institute of Public Health of Vojvodina, University of Novi Sad, Faculty of Medicine, Novi Sad, Serbia; School of Public Health, Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB), Brussels, Belgium

Abstract

The healthcare sector is a significant contributor to global greenhouse gas emissions, making it important to adopt decarbonization strategies. Transitioning to a low-carbon healthcare system is vital not only for reducing environmental impact but also for ensuring long-term sustainability and resilience in public health systems. New technologies give an innovative solution that can reduce emissions while maintaining high standards of care.

Key decarbonization measures include the adoption of energy-efficient medical equipment, smart healthcare infrastructure, and renewable energy sources in healthcare. Telemedicine is another powerful tool, reducing the need for patient travel and the associated emissions from transportation, while increasing healthcare accessibility, especially in rural or underserved areas. AI-driven diagnostics and data analytics optimize healthcare delivery, reducing waste and improving resource efficiency.

Hospitals and healthcare centers can further contribute to decarbonization by integrating solar power, green building technologies, and sustainable waste management practices. These innovations not only help reduce energy consumption but also improve the overall environmental footprint of healthcare facilities. To drive widespread adoption of these technologies, policy frameworks and financial incentives must support sustainable healthcare practices. Governments, healthcare providers, and industry should collaborate to scale innovative technologies that foster a decarbonized, resilient healthcare system. By aligning healthcare with climate goals, the sector can play a leading role in mitigating climate change, improving sustainability, and ensuring better health outcomes for future generations.

Incorporating new technologies into healthcare is key to achieving a sustainable health sector. The healthcare industry can reduce its environmental impact, improve operational efficiency, and build resilience against climate-related health risks

Presentation 3: Environmental Sustainability in Health Technology Assessment (ESHTA)

Sarin K

Health Intervention and Technology Assessment Program , Nonthaburi , Thailand

Abstract

Recognising the environmental impacts of health technologies, the HTA community have been calling to redefine the very notion of 'value' to ensure our health systems are not only efficient and equitable but also environmentally sustainable. However, there is lack of consensus on the definition, scope, and methods to incorporate environmental sustainability in healthcare. To provide guidance on these issues, a WG within HTAi, the Environmental Sustainability in Health Technology Assessment (ESHTA), was established in November 2023. ESHTA comprises over 110 members representing over 20 countries from Africa, Asia, Australia, Europe, and North America with diverse perspectives. The WG is conducting two modified Delphi studies to build consensus on the definition and the scope of ESHTA. In parallel, a scoping review and in-depth interviews are being conducted to identify and assess the appropriateness of existing methods to incorporate ESHTA. In addition, ESHTA routinely hosts guest talks to foster knowledge sharing and build a community of practice. Preliminary lessons from ESHTA include the value of emphasising 'sustainable development' (to support universal health coverage) rather than just assessing environmental impacts and the need to incorporate diverse perspectives such as patient groups, industry, regulators, etc. to support decision making. Furthermore, ESHTA has emphasised the potential role of early HTA to spearhead the transition towards environmentally sustainable health technologies. Recommendations from ESHTA are likely to be useful to policy makers, regulators, providers, HTA agencies, health technology developers, and researchers.

Panellist

Marleen Bekker

Associate Professor of Health Policy and Politics in the Health and Society group at Wageningen University Group

WEDNESDAY 12th, 14:00-14:45- Room 12, 1st floor congress wing

HIA - Join the Health Impact assessment Network meeting

Prof Piedad Martin-Olmedo

President of EUPHA-HIA section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain).

Preliminary program

- Goals for the year
- Activities conducted during 2025, included EPH Conference Helsinki
- Networking opportunities
- Proposals for EPH Conference Bilbao

WEDNESDAY 12th, 17:20-17:45- Room 4 (2nd Floor)

PechaKucha Sesion: The Politics of Health Impact Assessment

Organiser / Co-organisers

EUPHA Public health policy and politics section

General abstract

Impact assessment is commonly presented as a central pillar of evidence-based policy-making and the solution to making 'better' regulation. It has also been identified as a mechanism by which the Health in All Policies (HiAP) agenda might be advanced, ensuring that the health impacts of all interventions – whether originating in the health sector or not – are taken into account by policymakers. Yet, it remains difficult to identify, quantify and balance health impacts, to integrate qualitative and longer-term health costs and benefits into analysis, and ensure that the findings and nuances of impact assessment are considered within the policy process. Moreover, challenging current political developments may reduce input legitimacy and increase corporate capture of the impact assessment process, as seen in cases such as the tobacco industry.

EUPHA has a well-established programme of work in this space, critiquing and advancing the practice of impact assessment in the public health field. Drawing on this expertise and adding value by combining it, this workshop brings together representatives from the Public Health Politics and Policy (PHPP), Health Impact Assessment (HIA) and Public Health Economics (PHE) sections of EUPHA. A panel of experts will examine the role of impact assessment in health policy and address a core challenge to it; namely, the capacity for impact assessment to make the policy process more amenable to public health concerns.

Presentations (using the 15x15 format) will introduce the European Commission's approach to (health) impact assessment (Orhan Pees), explore existing methodologies of HIA and the challenges that they face (Martin), critique the applicability of dominant pharmacoeconomics approaches to assessment of public health interventions (Vasco Santos), examine the relevance of health system performance assessment to impact assessment exercises (Blümel et al.). Each panellist will be asked to close their presentation by addressing the following question: to what extent is impact assessment a valuable tool for delivering policy that is good for health?

Message 1

Impact assessment has advanced significantly in recent years, but its ability to deliver better policy outcomes for health requires continual, multidisciplinary appraisal.

Message 2

As a public health community we need to collaborate more to deal with the complex challenges of the future

Chairperson 1 : Dr. Marleen Bekker

Associate Professor of Health Policy and Politics in the Health and Society group at Wageningen University Group

Panellist 1: Dr Rana Orhan Pees

Vice-President of EUPHA-PHPP section; enior Consultant in Health and Wellbeing

Panellist 2: Prof. Piedad Martín-Olmedo

President of EUPHA-HIA section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain); researcher at ibs-Granada (Granada, Spain)

Panellist 3: Prof João Vasco Santos

President of EUPHA-ECO section; Associate Professor. Universidade do Porto (Porto, Portugal)

Panellist 4: Dr Miriam Blümel

WHO Collaborating Centre for Health Systems Research and Management, Berlin (Germany)

FRIDAY 14th, 14:00-15:00- Venue: *Kelo (LF)*

Workshop title: The critical contribution of local interventions in improving population health

Organiser / Co-organisers

EUPHA Health promotion section, EUPHA Chronic diseases Section, EUPHA Health impact assessment section, EUPHA Migrant and ethnic minority health section

Workshop abstract

This workshop is about the largely undervalued role of local efforts to improve population health and equity. In spite of massive evidence on the benefits of investments in capacities for community-driven health efforts and the clear limitations (adverse impact on equity) of top-down approaches to population improvement in health. Most national health systems have yet to reflect this evidence in their priorities, health policies and investments. In this very interactive 60-minute workshop, we will tap into the experience of 4 different countries implementing community health actions.

Speakers will present to the audience elements of answers to the following questions:

- What can the local level do that is beyond the reach of other levels of governance?
- Why engaging the local population and stakeholders is critical to significant improvements in population health and equity?
- How can local initiatives complement health promotion efforts deployed at different levels?

This workshop will contribute to a most needed discussion at EUPHA on the positioning of local initiatives and interventions in national health systems and on the support they require.

Message 1

By mobilising local population and increasing their ownership of the interventions, public health actions gain in culturally sensitivity, sustainability and be better suited to local needs.

Message 2

Local actions are more likely to generate their benefits when supported by coherent national policies that engage all level of governance

Chairperson 1 : Prof Eric Breton

President of EUPHA-HP section; professor in Public Health at Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain).

Presentation 1: Insights on factors impeding or facilitating local efforts in physical activity promotion

Sherihane Bensemmane

Department of Epidemiology and public health. SCIENSANO (Brussels, Belgium)

Abstract

In various countries, physical activity on prescription or referral (PAP/R) has been used to promote physical activity and reduce sedentary behaviours in order to create change in

lifestyles in citizens. In Belgium, there is no national policy on PAP/R, however several initiatives and programmes exist. Many other initiatives promote physical activity in the population using various mediums and embed their work within communities. Local initiatives are often resourceful and resilient, drawing on their knowledge of their environment, experience in the field and networks to make an impact. Drawing from the experience of the promotion of physical activity in local communities in Belgium, this presentation will offer insight into the benefits and potential problems that may arise from government supported local actions. There are lessons to be learnt in terms of:

- Sustainability, especially in terms for funding and long-term planning to improve health promotion actions and health of citizens
- Mismatch between governance competencies, local reality and national frameworks, which hinders the impact of health promotion efforts
- The role of local initiatives and the inclusion the local population with an equity lense

The case of Belgium can be used to emphasize the strength of local initiatives as well as their pitfalls. In order to promote health through physical activity, it is important to build on cooperation and integration of various levels of governance. Supporting local communities can close the gap between recommendations, change in behaviours and improvement in health status. It is important to avoid working in silos, re-connection and co-construction could lead to a sustainable system whilst taking into account needs and perspectives at local and national or macro levels.

Presenter 2: Community-Driven Interventions to Reduce Inequities Among Migrants: Two Case Studies from Portugal

Prof Sonia Dias

NOVA National School of Public Health, PHRC Comprehensive Health Research Center (Lisbon, Portugal)

Abstract

Community health programs play a vital role in reducing health inequities among migrant populations. In Portugal, two participatory initiatives highlight how co-designed and inclusive approaches can lead to more responsive, sustainable, and effective health interventions.

Case Study 1 focuses on a health literacy project aiming to support the prevention of non-communicable diseases, particularly cardiovascular diseases and diabetes, among migrant communities. Central to the project was the creation of a Community Board, which brought together migrants, researchers, health and social care professionals, and policy stakeholders. This diverse group co-led key aspects of the research process, including identifying priorities, informing data collection tools, and co-designing intervention strategies. Their involvement ensured cultural and linguistic appropriateness, while enhancing community ownership and relevance. The project demonstrated how participatory methods, when grounded in lived experience, contribute to more accessible and equitable health outcomes.

Case Study 2 adapts “Music & Motherhood”, a WHO-led arts and health intervention for maternal mental health, to the Portuguese context. The 10-week program offers weekly in-person singing sessions for migrant mothers and their babies. A Participant and Stakeholder Involvement group - including mothers with lived experience, mental health professionals, academics, and artists - guides the adaptation and implementation of the intervention to ensure it meets local needs and resources.

Together, these case studies demonstrate how participatory, community-based approaches not only enhance the feasibility and cultural relevance of health interventions but also foster inclusion and long-term impact. Involving both communities and institutional stakeholders from the outset leads to more grounded, equitable, and effective health strategies for migrant populations.

Presentation 3: Local Health Action Network of Andalusia (RELAS)

Martin-Olmedo, P^{1,2}; Rodríguez Ruz, D³; Escudero Carretero MJ¹; Isac Martínez, B¹.

¹*Escuela Andaluza de Salud Pública (Granada, Spain);*

²*instituto de Investigación Biosanitaria de Granada, ibs.Granada (Granada (Spain))*

³*Andalusian Ministry of Health and Consumer*

Abstract

Nearly 50% of the factors contributing to morbidity and mortality are determinants which often lie outside the healthcare system's direct control, emphasizing the importance of intersectoral interventions. The 'Health in All Policies' (HiAP) approach seeks to address these determinants by promoting policies across sectors ensuring that health considerations are integrated into all decision-making processes. At the local level, this approach becomes especially vital. The proximity to communities allows local authorities to identify specific needs, address root causes, and maximize the positive effects of health determinants, ultimately building healthier and more equitable environments for their populations.

The Local Health Action Network (RELAS, in Spanish) is a program promoted since 2008 by the Andalusian Ministry of Health and Consumer Affairs, aligned with the Strategy for Promoting a Healthy Life in Andalusia (Spain). It focuses on bringing health initiatives to the local level, empowering municipalities to apply HiAP principles creating environments that encourage healthier lifestyles and provide safer and more supportive settings. RELAS emphasizes addressing social determinants of health, such as education, employment, housing, and access to clean water, within neighbourhoods and communities. Municipal councils are key drivers of this initiative, coordinating efforts across public and private sectors while engaging citizens to protect their health and promote quality of life. RELAS supports municipalities in developing Local Health Plans to tackle specific risks and challenges in their areas. Currently the population of the municipalities affiliated with RELAS represents 71% of the Autonomous Community's population.

By fostering local health action, RELAS strengthens community-focused solutions and encourages active participation in improving public health outcomes.

Presentation 4: Innovative Approaches to Implement Chronic Disease Prevention Programs in Community Settings

Stranges, S^{1,2}; Petrella, RJ²

¹*Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, Western University (London, Canada)*

²*Faculty of Medicine, University of British Columbia (Vancouver, Canada)*

Abstract

Evidence-based programs relying on multidomain lifestyle interventions to prevent chronic disease are well-established, but their implementation in real-world settings remains limited.

Community settings such as schools, social service organizations, municipal institutions, workplaces, and recreational sport organizations are promising options for implementing preventive programs because they are highly influential settings in the daily lives of most individuals. From a health equity perspective, focusing prevention efforts in community settings has the potential to reach populations with disproportionately higher chronic disease risk who are not able to access health improvement opportunities because of systemic societal factors.

We will present the experience of the Hockey Fans In Training (Hockey FIT) program in Canada. This is a gender-sensitized lifestyle intervention that uses the power of sport fandom to engage hard-to-reach populations, such as men. The underrepresentation of men in lifestyle interventions, combined with men being less likely to seek preventive health care services but more likely to engage in high-risk behaviours compared with women, requires innovative approaches specifically designed for men, such as sport fandom as suggested by previous studies.

This program suggests that participants who received the Hockey FIT intervention had a significant reduction in weight and demonstrated greater improvements in other health indicators than control participants after 3 months, and improvements were maintained at 12 months. It is plausible that improved health status as a result of participation in Hockey FIT could also contribute to a difference in healthcare resource use and costs, thus representing a cost-effective strategy to mitigate the substantial obesity burden on healthcare systems and society.