Sustainable transport and health: results, experiences and challenges from integrated assessments for shifting the paradigm for cycling and walking

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Aim and short description: Once completely marginalized, sustainable transport options including cycling and walking are gaining interest among public health, environment and transport policy makers, as evidence emerges on the great but still underexplored potential of these modes to benefit the environment through reduced emissions and congestion as well as public health through opportunities for regular physical activity. Yet, there is a need to address concerns with regard to possible risks from other exposures such as to air pollutants or traffic injury. In this regard, a recent Dutch study presented important new evidence, showing that the benefits of regular bicycling outweighed the risks from injuries and as well as higher intakes of air pollution due to higher breathing rates by at least an order of magnitude. However, more such integrated assessments of the risks and benefits of cycling and walking are needed, and appropriate tools and methods to facilitate this. The products also need to be easily applicable in a context of transport and urban planning and climate change policy making, facilitating the active engagements of sectors whose impact on health often exceeds that of the health sector itself. Challenges to address include the need for comprehensive input information, a significant lack of quantitative information on many factors considered relevant and complex effect interactions, amongst others.

This symposium will present and discuss results and experiences made as well as challenges identified with a range of comprehensive assessments of sustainable transport options with a particular focus on cycling and walking. It will present latest scientific approaches of integrated assessments of different exposures. As on an area of research with direct policy relevance, the symposium will also present results and experience from application of such approaches in the policy arena including engagement with non-health sectors and win-win opportunities through climate change mitigation policies. The discussion will focus on indentifying main challenges and lead to an outlook for future directions for research.

We also propose an accompanying poster-session to be held in the following poster-session time slot. This session could be introduced briefly during the symposium (5-10 minutes), and symposium participants would be invited to a walk-around; alternatively or in addition, depending on quality of submitted abstracts, an additional oral session could be considered. Proposals of abstracts for inclusion are annexed, others might be indentified in the review process.

Presentations:

1. Transportation, air pollution and physical activity: integrated health impact assessment of the Bike sharing system “Bicing” in Barcelona, Spain
   Speaker: David Rojas, CREAL, Barcelona, Spain

2. Health impact modelling of alternative active travel visions for England and Wales using a transport and health integrated modelling tool (THIM)
   Speaker: James Woodcock, LSHTM, United Kingdom

3. Working with non-health sectors: a review of experiences with economic approaches to promote cycling and walking: the Health Economic Assessment Tool (HEAT)
   Speaker: Sonja Kahlmeier*, University of Zurich, Switzerland; Francesca Racioppi, WHO Regional Office for Europe

4. Obtaining Health from Climate Change Mitigation Policies in Transport
   Speaker: Carlos Dora, WHO HQ, Public Health and the Environment Department

5. Brief introduction of accompanying poster session

6. General discussion, focusing on challenges and future directions for research