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Abstracts

Health Information Literacy at School to Create Awareness on Planetary Health: The Pilot Project of School-work Alternating System in Italy

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Planetary health and information literacy

Planetary health, a new science including individual, community and environmental health, depends on the interrelation of different factors (physical, biological, chemical, socio-cultural, economic) and determines the state of health and well-being of the population and the environment in which we live (Rockefeller Foundation, 2015). The safeguard of planetary health requires a multidisciplinary approach where knowledge management and information literacy play an important role (Horton, 2015; Sørensen et al., 2012). In this framework, schools are a privileged place to start life-long learning health information literacy programs (WHO, 2012). The researchers of the Istituto Superiore di Sanità (ISS, the National Institute of Health in Italy) are approaching this issue (De Castro et al., 2013).

Objective

To show how researchers can work together with schools to increase awareness of the responsibilities associated with planetary health and contribute achieving better health for the population and the environment worldwide.

Methodology

In 2015 a new law introduced in Italy the concept of school-work alternating systems which makes it compulsory for high school students to spend a period of time in a workplace (Italy, 2015). The ISS researchers considered it as an opportunity to make students aware of planetary health issues through practical activities: a pilot project was developed to define an appealing offer of training modules for students to become aware of the main challenges and responsibilities associated with planetary health and how research can contribute to tackle them.

Outcome

24 modules were designed within four areas: Environment and health; Biology and clinics; Prevention and life styles; Communication and science. The training offer received enthusiastic response from both students and teachers. Four high schools were selected to test the program (pilot project: April-July 2016). The content of the modules, organizational model and results achieved will be presented and evaluated with the objective to develop a nationwide program for the coming school year 2016-2017.

Discussion

The major difficulties encountered in the pilot project design, implementation and evaluation will be analysed to improve the organizational model and further stress the links between planetary health, school education and health literacy in a life-long learning perspective.

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