

## **Academics, Practitioners and Policy Makers Urge a Radical Shift in Transport Planning to Prioritize Health**

*The Barcelona Institute for Global Health (ISGlobal), supported by the "la Caixa" Foundation, hosts the 3rd International Conference on Transport and Health*

Barcelona, July 28, 2017 - The third edition of the [International Conference on Transport and Health \(ICTH\)](#), being held this week in Barcelona, highlighted the need for a "change of perspective" in transport planning and policy to evolve towards **sustainable models that prioritize people's health**. The event, which presents global research on the health impacts of transport-related exposures and urban living, is taking place from June 26th to 29th at the [Barcelona Institute for Global Health \(ISGlobal\)](#), a center supported by the "la Caixa" Foundation.

Currently, estimates indicate that **the transport sector employs 10 million people in Europe alone**, and contributes to **5% of GDP**. "In our globalized world, the weight of the transport sector on the economy and technological advancements is increasing, but so are its health consequences", warns **Mark Nieuwenhuijsen**, Director of the [Urban Planning, Environment and Health Initiative](#) at ISGlobal and co-chair of the conference. "**Better urban planning** could contribute to [preventing 20% of premature mortality](#), as data from Barcelona demonstrate. Experts from different fields urgently need to work together to put people's health first. The way in which the transport network is designed and managed is a matter of public health", he adds.

The **Coordinator of the Public Health, Environmental and Social Determinants of Health Department of the World Health Organization (WHO)**, **Carlos Dora**, stated that: "To protect public health today it is crucial to **prioritize policies that promote public transportation, walking and cycling and electric mobility** where necessary." He believes, "this would increase people's physical activity levels, reduce air and noise pollution, contribute to the fight against climate change and transform cities into healthier and more attractive places."

"In terms of human health, transport policies traditionally focused on motor vehicle crashes and more recently on air pollution, yet the range of **environmental and lifestyle exposures associated with transport** are much wider, including transport related noise, heat islands, lack of green space, physical inactivity, community severance and social exclusion, greenhouse gases alongside air pollution and motor vehicle crashes", says **Haneen Khreis**, ISGlobal researcher.

ICTH brings together professionals from different sectors and profiles, including public administrators, researchers and planners. According to **Karyn M. Warsow**, executive director of TPH Link, organizer of the event, "ICTH is designed to **bridge the gap between scientific investigation and real-world application**".

Among the various issues addressed during the week is the challenges and opportunities posed by the explosion of autonomous vehicles. "It is still too early to determine the impact of autonomous vehicle uptake, since this will depend on the business model used. If we stay committed to motorized vehicles powered by fossil fuels and for individual use, we will probably reduce the number of accidents, but the

problems related to sedentarism, air and noise pollution and occupation of public space will not be solved”, advises **David Rojas-Rueda**, a researcher at ISGlobal. "On the other hand, if we encourage **electric vehicles for collective use** and in a model that does not push us to own a car, but to be users of a public service, we could see important health gains."

## Resources

ICTH's photos and videos: <http://bit.ly/ISGlobal ICTH2017>

## About ISGlobal

The Barcelona Institute for Global Health, ISGlobal, is the fruit of an innovative alliance between academic, government, and the "la Caixa" Foundation to contribute to the efforts undertaken by the international community to address the challenges in global health. ISGlobal is a consolidated hub of excellence in research that has grown out of work first started in the world of health care by the Hospital Clínic and the Parc de Salut MAR and in the academic sphere by the University of Barcelona and Pompeu Fabra University. The pivotal mechanism of its work model is the transfer of knowledge generated by scientific research to practice, a task undertaken by the institute's Education and Policy and Global Development departments. ISGlobal a member of the CERCA programme of the Generalitat de Catalunya.

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