

RATIONALE

OBESITY | *Perceptions, obstacles and strategies.* *The Italy model between science and policy*



The alarming numbers of obesity in Italy send a very clear message of urgency to Politics: an ambitious and visionary response and health protections for millions of citizens is not an option but rather an urgent political, social and economic responsibility.

6 million citizens today are obese and 23 severely overweight and if not appropriately diagnosed and treated risk becoming future patients with unsustainable health and economic impacts. Despite the growth projections that have led WHO to use the term "Globesity" to describe the magnitude and severity of the phenomenon, Italy has not prioritized attention on the political agenda to date, resulting in a fragmented and fragile system of protections.

Historically, the focus has been mainly on prevention and lifestyles, that is a necessary condition but not sufficient to tackle the dimensions of a more complex disease that also has genetic components and requires diagnosis, proximity care and treatment to be addressed. In other words, to be recognized as a top priority chronic disease. Significant policy challenges still exist: obesity is not recognized in the National Chronicity Plan, national standards for the governance of care in the territory, screening plans, Diagnostic Therapeutic Care Plans and the inclusion in the Essential Levels of Care are still missing and could be crucial to launch a long term strategy.

Today this paradigm is changing and Italy can become a European model of excellence.

A new attention is finally raising in the political arena, in parliamentary debates, thanks to legislative proposals that aim to fill a gap opening to a formal disease recognition and an innovative integrated strategy to face obesity from prevention, diagnosis to treatment.

The road is still to be built to implement a concrete plan of action in the Regions and overcome a deep-rooted social and clinical stigma that still relegates the condition to a self-imposed condition rather than a complex chronic condition and risk factor of the most widespread chronic diseases. But a new era is coming.

If Policy has the prerogative to anticipate and manage health threats, Science has the responsibility to highlight their magnitude, risks and find the necessary innovation and care solutions. Multistakeholder dialogue give the opportunity to find shared efficient solutions.

In the framework of the European Congress on Obesity to be held in Venice on May 13, the institutional event will promote that dialogue with Science, Institutional, Parliament and Patients' Associations representatives to identify challenges and shared solutions that can respond to unmet medical needs and design a future and Science proof HCS for millions of patients.

The event will be an opportunity to share the contents of the policy paper edited by I-COM thanks to authoritative experts that will delve into the numbers and socio-economic impact in Italy, the current regulatory framework of protections in Italy for people with obesity but will also capture the sense of urgency and the perception of citizens and institutions with respect to obesity through a survey to open the discussion to concrete policy proposals.

