Plenary 8: Making a difference in the public’s health. How research and evidence can effect policy practice?

To paraphrase Karl Marx: the scientists have interpreted the world; the point, however, is to change it. We now know a great deal about the causes of disease, the distribution within the population and the broader socio-economic determinants of health. We also know about what public health interventions are effective. Our problem is that we find it difficult to implement policies at a population level when they often clash with social beliefs, undermine economic interests or challenge political agendas. This is more so in times of major public health crises in which often policy and politics becomes one.

The plenary will explore how research and evidence can (and should) play a much bigger role in enabling implementation of public health policy, drawing, in particular, from the experience with addressing the COVID-19 pandemic - the perfect public health storm. Are we effective knowledge brokers ensuring that research is translated into timely, transparent and evidence-informed policy response? Do we have enough understanding of the political economy of decision making and its inbuilt cognitive biases? Are we communicating evidence in policy actionable terms? How do we deal with social media and the ‘infodemics’ phenomenon?

The session will be run as a high-level panel debate bringing together four key perspectives from a prestigious research institution, a top scientific journal, the WHO and the public health community. The session will offer ample opportunity to bring in questions and contributions from the participating audience into the debate.

Panelists
Hans Kluge, WHO Regional Director for Europe
Richard Horton, Chief Editor The Lancet
Chris Murray, Director Institution for Health Metrics and Evaluation
Naomi Limaro Nathan, Young Professional ASPHER

Moderators
Luis Eugenio de Souza, Elected President of the World Federation of Public Health Associations
Josep Figueras, Director European Observatory on Health Systems and Policies