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PRESS RELEASE

Communication, Medicine and Ethics. The international conference at the Department of Economics and Management

From 26th to 28th June, the University of Brescia is hosting the 22nd International and Interdisciplinary Conference “Communication, Medicine and Ethics”, the first in-person edition in Italy of the COMET Society conference, which brings together scholars and experts from all over the world to talk about communication and ethics in healthcare.

The scheduled plenary speakers, together with Rector Prof. Francesco Castelli, who is delivering the opening address, are Prof. Anna Middleton (Kavli Centre for Ethics, Science and the Public, University of Cambridge), Prof. Stefan Timmermans (University of California, Los Angeles) and Prof. Silvio Brusaferrò (University of Udine).

Brescia, 14th June 2024 - **From Wednesday 26th to Friday 28th June**, the Department of Economics and Management (DEM), in collaboration with the Department of Medical and Surgical Specialties, Radiological Sciences and Public Health (DSMC), of the University of Brescia is hosting the **22nd annual “International and Interdisciplinary Conference on Communication, Medicine and Ethics”** of the **COMET (Communication, Medicine and Ethics) Society**.

The international conference brings together experts and scholars from many countries and different disciplinary fields, from health specialities to the humanities and social sciences. The aim is to share studies and research on the topics of communication at the service of health education, the doctor-patient relationship and professional ethics.

The press conference this afternoon in the Aula Apollo of the Rectorate was attended by **Prof. Francesco Castelli**, Rector of the University of Brescia, and the co-organisers of the conference, **Prof. Annalisa Zanola**, Full Professor of English Language and Linguistics, and **Prof. Elisabetta Ceretti**, Associate Professor of General and Applied Hygiene.

«Communication in the medical field is characterised by a strong “divide” between a non-specialist language (from the patient’s side) and a hyper-specialist language (from the health professional’s side). - explains Prof. Zanola - What makes the difference between the medical expert and the non-expert is not only the professional qualification, but the ability to provide information and generate appropriate communication exchanges in different contexts. The COMET conference aims to shed light on the crucial role played by medical communication not

only in the dissemination of knowledge, but also in the pragmatic, operational and ethical choices that result from it. The challenge is to promote a genuine integration between clinical experiences, everyday life and the written and oral forms of communication needed to recount them».

«Communication is a powerful tool to address the growing and complex challenges of health, - Prof. Ceretti emphasises - a tool for care, that health professionals need to learn about and use because it can help change people's knowledge, attitudes and behaviour and empower them to make choices that help protect and improve their own, their families', and their communities' health and wellbeing».

This year's edition, the first to be held in-person in Italy, opens on 26th June at 9.00 a.m. in the Aula Magna of Via San Faustino, with institutional greetings and a lecture by the **Rector of the University of Brescia, Prof. Francesco Castelli**, Full Professor of Infectious Diseases and holder of the UNESCO chair "Training and empowering human resources for health development in resource-limited countries". His lecture, entitled "**Health literacy and communication with migrants' populations: the case of Covid-19**", is intended as an opportunity to explore the need for more inclusive and sensitive approaches to linguistic and cultural differences in health communication, starting from the experience of the pandemic, during which linguistic minorities were often more exposed to disinformation.

On the same day, at 5.30 p.m., it is time for the lecture by **Prof. Anna Middleton**, Director of the Kavli Centre for Ethics, Science and the Public at the University of Cambridge. "**Human embryo editing: citizens jury for deliberation of ethics and policy formation**" is dedicated to the experiment carried out at the Wellcome Genome Campus in Cambridge in September 2022, which involved 21 people with direct experience in the field of genetic diseases, who formed a "citizens jury" and expressed their opinion on the legitimacy of human genome editing in the fight against some serious genetic diseases.

On **Thursday 27th**, at 11.30 a.m., **Prof. Silvio Brusaferrò**, Full Professor of Hygiene and Public Health at the University of Udine and Director of the Unit for Accreditation, Clinical Risk Management and Health Performance Evaluation in Udine, delivers his lecture: "**Institutional communication in public health crises: lessons learned during the Sars-Cov-2 pandemic**", which focuses on institutional communication during public health crises. Indeed, the pandemic has highlighted the need to invest in the training of health professionals also in the field of communication, in order to ensure that scientifically adequate information is conveyed to the public, and coordinate messages at an international level.

On **Friday 28th**, the last day of the conference, **Prof. Stefan Timmermans**, Professor of sociology at UCLA in Los Angeles, explores the doctor-patient relationship in "**Contextualising the patient-doctor encounter**". The scholar looks at how exchanges between doctors and patients are constrained by changing social roles, external institutional pressures and national health policies, analysing key aspects of this relationship in the US context.

The conference programme includes the Pre-COMET **Masterclass "Engaging Qualitatively with Healthcare Communication"**, led by Emeritus Professor of English Linguistics **Srikant Sarangi**, Aalborg University (Denmark) and Cardiff University (UK), dedicated to key topics in healthcare communication research, scheduled for **Tuesday 25th June**, as well as several parallel sessions and one **poster session** preceded by a **plenary poster session** on 27th June.

The full programme of the event is available on the website: <https://comet2024.unibs.it/>