



## IVM's international academic Chair in China Professor Roger Mackett, guest 2010

**Improving children's wellbeing through active travel.** In Britain and many other countries children have become overweight and obese partly because they are less active than in the past. One reason for this is because they are walking and cycling less than they used to, and using the car more, particularly for trips after school and at weekends. This is a consequence of increasing car ownership, the complexity of modern life in which many mothers are employed, often part-time, increasing perception of the risks to children being out without adult supervision, and the shift from free play to organized activities. The increased use of the car to school is also due to government policy allowing parental choice of school which means that many choose schools other than the nearest, and parents dropping children at school as part of a trip to work by car. The effects of this change on children's volumes of physical activity have been demonstrated by fitting a sample of children with accelerometers and asking them to keep activity and travel diaries. This research has shown that, for some children, walking to and from school for a week uses more calories than two hours of physical education and games lessons, and that children who walk more than they travel by car are more energetic in all their activities. The range of measures and policies being adopted in Britain to encourage children to walk and cycle will be discussed.

### **Overcoming the barriers to access for older people**

As people grow older, they become less capable of reaching the opportunities that they need to access to maintain their quality of life. In Britain and many other countries there is legislation to ensure that buildings and modes of travel are accessible for people with disabilities. While some older people have well-defined disabilities, such as visual impairment or being in a wheelchair, which are covered by legislation, many others have less well-defined disabilities which mean that they have difficulty walking far or up steps. With more people living longer, the number with limited mobility will continue to increase. Issues in consulting older people about their accessibility needs and the difficulties in both assessing and meeting these needs will be discussed in the presentation. The use of the software tool AMELIA (A Methodology to Enhance Life by Increasing Accessibility) to see which policies are most cost-effective in overcoming the barriers to access for older people will be described, using suitable examples. The presentation will also discuss the provision of public transport facilities in London to provide access for older people, particularly in the context of providing 'access for all', by making all forms of transport easier to use, and so reducing the need to provide specialist transport. Because it will never be possible to design transport

facilities that absolutely everyone can use, there is a danger that those with extreme mobility limitations may be worse off.