

IBD Bridge: Building Empathy and Understanding in Schools

In the landscape of adolescent health challenges, IBD often remains misunderstood. Amici Italia's "IBD Bridge" project represents a signal of hope, bridging the knowledge gap in schools. By enlightening students and educators on the intricacies of these conditions, the project cultivates empathy and inclusion.

From a personal standpoint, living with Crohn's since middle school has been a journey marked by isolation and misunderstanding. School, a domain for learning and social growth, often transformed into a battleground of misconceptions. The ignorance surrounding IBD made everyday school life challenging. Frequent absences and the constant need for medical attention were misinterpreted, leading to a sense of alienation.

This initiative by Amici Italia is more than an educational campaign; it's a crucial step towards normalizing IBD in educational settings. These sessions, led by gastroenterologists and psychologists, focus on the difficulties faced by students with chronic illnesses. The core aim is to sensitize students and teachers to the realities of living with IBD, promoting an inclusive and discrimination-free environment. Furthermore the sessions address both scientific and psychological aspects, ensuring a holistic understanding. As it expands, reaching more schools in Milan, Catania and Trieste, the project promises to change narratives, one school at a time. **Key to the project's success is the involvement of students with IBD.** Their firsthand accounts provide invaluable insights into living with a chronic illness. This patient perspective, coupled with expert advice, fosters a comprehensive understanding of the challenges and necessary accommodations in the educational setting.

The project "IBD Bridge" doesn't just teach; it transforms environments, making schools a supportive space for students like me. It's a testament to the power of awareness and the necessity of empathy in our education system. By implementing this project nationwide, Amici Italia aims to create a more inclusive, understanding, and supportive schooling experience for all students, irrespective of their health challenges. The project, aligning with the [National Chronicity Plan](#), addresses not only the integration of students with chronic conditions but also fosters social skills and inclusive behaviours among all students. By participating in these activities, schools contribute to a more empathetic society, preparing young individuals for a world where understanding and inclusivity are paramount. **This project by Amici Italia is a pioneering step in transforming Italian schools into inclusive environments. It paves the way for a better, more empathetic future, where conditions like IBD are understood and accommodated, making school a place of growth and support for every student.**



Lisa Bechtum
Member of AMICI Italia