

REALLY GOOD STUFF**Cinemeducation online—First German public health film festival****1 | WHAT PROBLEMS WERE ADDRESSED?**

The field of Public Health was discredited in Germany for a long time due to misconduct during the Nazi regime. It still plays only a marginal role in the curriculum of medical faculties and in political decision-making in Germany. To make public health more visible and convey its relevance to all areas of life, we used the didactic method ‘cinemeducation’,¹ combining online film screenings and discussions to enable participants to adopt different perspectives and to practice critical reflection.

2 | WHAT WAS TRIED?

The Public Health Film Festival (PHFF, phff.de) was an online event during the COVID-19 pandemic. For the 9-day-period, three films were available for streaming. The films were *El Susto* (2019) by Karen Akins, *Albatross* (2017) by Chris Jordan and *Disconnected* (2019) by Alice Aedy. For three consecutive days, prompted by these films, we held online Zoom discussions on the topics of public health nutrition, planetary health and public mental health with a panel of public health experts and the participants. Participants were able to ask questions and interact through the online engagement tool ‘mentimeter’. To raise awareness for the PHFF, we created a multicomponent campaign entailing social media and a website including a festival trailer.

3 | WHAT LESSONS WERE LEARNED?

The three films were streamed around 1000 times. In total, 176 participants—mainly German medical and public health students and young professionals—attended the three discussions. Of these, 71 (40.3%) participated in a short, structured teaching evaluation survey comprising three closed questions with answers on a 5-point Likert-scale (1 *strongly disagree*, 5 *strongly agree*) and an open-ended question. Most participants reflected more critically on the topic at hand (mean 4.2 [SD 1.03]) and got to know new perspectives (mean 4.3 [SD 0.89]). The Public Health Film Festival motivated the participants to look more closely at public health (mean 4.4 [SD 0.99]). In response to the open-ended question, participants appreciated that ‘scientists were more approachable’, and that the ‘discussion helped to clarify’ unclear

questions and opened up new perspectives by ‘making the public health connection to the film’. In addition, it was seen as a ‘super event to get to grips with public health in an uncomplicated way’ and as ‘great to have the filmmaker in the discussion’. The fact that one could not see the other participants and that questions were collected and rated anonymously was perceived differently from person to person. One participant wished for ‘more diverse experts and voices’.

In conclusion, the PHFF seems to be a suitable approach for conveying the relevance of the field to other health professionals and students. It puts public health issues on the agenda and appears to be a fun event, allowing people to take different perspectives. Through an interactive discussion, it offers early-career researchers and students the possibility to network with senior scientists. The online format is feasible, easily accessible, requires limited resources (i.e. film rights, software, and staff) and is transferable across different settings, universities and subjects. A second edition is scheduled for spring 2022.

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