



A Germ's Journey Newsdesk

Event Date: Wednesday 26th May 2021

<https://www.Germ'sjourney.com/>

1 Newsdesk Outline

Germ's Journey is planning an international multimedia *newsdesk* in which we host a conversation between community health and community media practitioners and advocates. The aim of the newsdesk is to share experiences and insight of how community-focussed communications practices for public health have been tested during the Covid-19 pandemic. The conversations will be between *community health*, *community education* and *community media* advocates from different countries, who work across different media platforms, and who each support their communities based on their professional and non-professional skills and knowledge. The newsdesk is an opportunity to be part of an international conversation about the challenges of managing public health communications using community media. The newsdesk is a way to share the knowledge and insight gained during the pandemic about public health education, with the aim of identifying how we might better support public health communication practices in the future.

The newsdesk approach uses low-cost and easily accessible social media platforms, such as Facebook, Zoom and YouTube, that are relevant and accessible to each group of contributors. The newsdesk brings together and facilitates the shared exchange of knowledge and experience with a wider network of community-health and community media practitioners, educators, advocates and volunteers. The newsdesk can be thought of as a knowledge exchange 'hub' through which A Germ's Journey partners and associates are able to share what they have learnt about communicating for public health. The aim is to understand how these essential projects can better support collaborative learning, open discussion and the purposeful evaluation of community-focussed health communications practices.

Conversations will focus on:

- **Public Health Myth-Busting** – how do we make communications relevant and trustworthy.
- **Community Education** – where does the learning happen and who makes it happen?
- **Community Communications** – which platforms and tools are trusted to bring people together?
- **Social Psychology** – how can we go beyond narrow ideas of behaviourism?

2 A Germ's Journey Background

A Germ's Journey project is led by [Professor Sarah Younie](#) and [Dr Katie Laird](#) of [De Montfort University](#). The newsdesk is supported by a grant from the UK Higher Education Innovations Fund (HEIF) and is developed in collaboration with [De Montfort University Public Engagement's](#) support for [UN Sustainable Development Goal Sixteen – Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions](#). The book '[A Germ's Journey](#)' has been developed and published Medina Publishing, and is supported by Jules Marriner, Shelly McDonald and Hannah Sothcott. The story of A Germ's Journey development will be shared as part of the newsdesk.

A Germs Journey links people across three continents to promote the message that handwashing as an essential part of our personal and public health responsibilities. A Germ's Journey supports people in developing communities to make and share their own trusted and engaging media content about public health and hygiene.

Underpinning Germ's Journey is the idea that public health information is more effective if co-produced by people who share an affinity and common life-experiences. This means making media that reflects what it is like to live in a specific place and community. A Germ's Journey aims to support public health focussed communications that fits with local social and cultural priorities, that meets the expectations and priorities of people acting for themselves to make homegrown improvements in their health and wellbeing.

3 Public Health Communication Priorities

Until a vaccine is widely available and affordable to all communities, the only way to manage the Covid-19 pandemic is to bring about widespread behaviour change with regards to personal hygiene, such as hand washing. Too often, however, expectations about behaviour change are focussed on Western systems of public health planning, which get translated and interpreted through a narrow lens of direct instructions and cause-and-effect thinking. This approach, as we have seen in the centralised public health messaging of the UK government, does not easily account for, or adapt to, differences of language, faith, culture, gender, age, social relationships, and the many other deeply held personal and non-technical intercultural outlooks that define us and our experiences in the communities we are embedded.

A Germ's Journey has demonstrated that well designed educational resources are essential to improving handwashing behaviour, particularly for young children. A Germ's Journey has demonstrated that it is vital to engage with children and their families creatively, and to offer supportive guidance that can help to expand their understanding of the process of germ transference. This is not about issuing instructions, but relies, instead, on the principle that by showing that people can care about their families, neighbours and communities first, they will be more willing to guide other people to bring about change.

A Germ's Journey takes an interdisciplinary approach to social action communications, combining health, education, psychology and community media, and focusses on helping people to co-create the education and communication resources that they need to improve their public health awareness. Due to the current lockdown restrictions, however, much of this work cannot be done in person, so alternative forms of engagement, training and information distribution are being explored. Using the founding ethos of co-creation, A Germ's Journey seeks to innovate by supporting community learning and community-focussed media platforms and processes. This approach is also being applied in the newsdesk to bring people together from across the world, to engage in conversations about the value of co-created and community-focussed communications that support public health.

4 Newsdesk Contributors

Each session will last approximately forty minutes, and will be hosted using Zoom, and will be live streamed via the A Germ's Journey YouTube channel. Social media will be used to share information and to engage in live conversations during the event as they take place in different countries.

4.1 Session One - Community Media in Bangladesh

- A conversation with Bazlur Rahman and Hiren Pandit who are leading community media advocates in Bangladesh. They will be exploring the challenges of 'communication collapse' and the impact of the fourth industrial revolution on public health communications thinking and practices.

4.2 Session Two – Community Education for Public Health

- A conversation with...

4.3 Session Three – The Story of A Germ's Journey

- A conversation about the origins and development of A Germ's Journey as a book. The discussion will be co-hosted by Hannah Southcott of Medina Books, and will explore the origins and development of A Germ's Journey with Jules Marriner, Shelly McDonald, Prof Sarah Younie and Dr Katie Laird.

4.4 Session Four – International Public Health Communication In TBC

- A discussion with...

5 Podcasts and Vlogs

In advance of the newsdesk event, A Germ's Journey will facilitate and host a series of podcasts and vlog discussions with international public health communications practitioners and advocates in Leicester. These discussions will be shared from the A Germ's Journey website, knowledge exchange hub and social media platforms. Following the live streamed events the discussions will be repurposed as podcasts and vlogs, and will be made available via the A Germ's Journey social media platforms.

6 Further Information

This event is being supported and developed by Dr Rob Watson and [Decentered Media](#). For further information and to arrange a conversation about taking part, please contact Rob via:

- robwatson@decentered.co.uk
- <https://decentered.co.uk>
- [@decenteredmedia](#)

