

Unleashing the imagination of schoolchildren to increase awareness about zoonotic disease and personal biosecurity measures

- Experiences from a scientific festival arranged by the local municipality and local universities

CONCLUSION

Through an interactive task we activated children's curiosity about zoonotic disease transmission and how different personal biosecurity measures can prevent infection.

Why?

Awareness of zoonotic diseases is a basic requisite for the implementation of personal biosecurity practices. However, informing the general public through science communication comes with challenges as people differ in characteristics, ways of interpreting information and previous knowledge.

The activity

The activity was targeted to children between 7-12 years old and included an arts and crafts corner where the children had access to different materials for creating their own zoonotic pathogen. After creating their pathogen, the students were asked to fill in a "microbe passport" together with a researcher (Figure 1).

In the passport, children could draw the host animal(s), choose if it was a virus or bacteria, specify symptoms, transmission routes and suggest protective measures.



Figure 2. The arts and craft corner before the children arrived.

RESULTS

Interaction with the children during the exercise generated discussion and questions based on each individual's perception and knowledge. These, in turn, allowed researchers to provide examples and mention existing zoonoses.

In particular, discussions about routes of transmission and protection from the pathogen sparked various ideas in the children. The researchers could then relate their ideas to common ways of disease transmission and give examples of biosecurity practices.

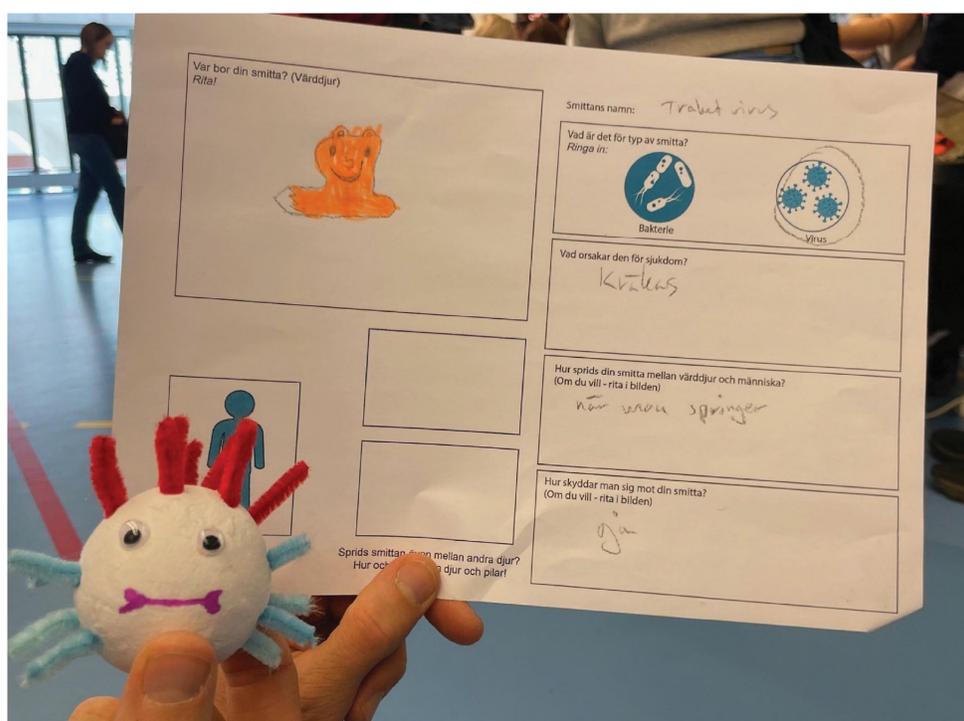


Figure 1. An example of a microbe and its passport



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