

Workshop Draft for Researchers' Night: Researchers in Schools



Reason4Health Project

www.reasonforhealth.f.bg.ac.rs



Workshop
Title

How the media cures our ills: Recognize pseudoscientific health recommendations in the media



Goal

Promoting a critical attitude towards health-related media messages



Duration

45 minutes or 90 minutes



Target
Group

Seventh- and eighth-grade elementary school students

Number of
Participants

20-40 (one class)



Ground
Rules

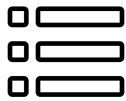
- We listen and do not interrupt
- We do not mock or judge others
- We do not use mobile phones

The rules are stated at the beginning and students are asked if they agree and if they have suggestions for additional rules.



Desired Outcomes

1. Students can distinguish between scientific and pseudoscientific arguments in the media coverage of health practices.
2. Students can recognize the strategies used to present pseudoscientific health practices to the audience.
3. Students can distinguish between reliable and unreliable sources of information in the media.
4. Students are empowered to independently question health-related media messages.
5. Students are aware of the role that the media play in shaping health behaviors.



45-Minute Workshop Procedures

Activity 1

How to distinguish between scientific and pseudoscientific arguments?

1. Students are given 2-3 advertising/news texts with instructions to read and highlight the arguments they recognize as scientific and pseudoscientific. They are also given a sheet with questions about the text that they should answer.
2. The facilitator invites the students to share the arguments that they have recognized as scientific and pseudoscientific and writes them down on the board/a large sheet of paper, separating them into two columns. The facilitator encourages discussion about what distinguishes the arguments listed in the *scientific* column from the arguments listed in the *pseudoscientific* column.
3. The facilitator summarizes the characteristics of scientific and pseudoscientific arguments.
4. Students are shown a demo of a [generator of random media stories](#) about traditional,

complementary and alternative medicine, and they should again recognize pseudoscientific arguments.

Activity 2

Where and how are pseudoscientific arguments used?

1. Students are shown a video clip [How the media cures our ills?](#) and asked to recognize strategies employed by the media (on social media, in the digital environment...) to get people to use certain health practices.

Activity 3

Designing a promotional message for peers

1. Students are divided into groups of three or four.
2. The groups are given the task of designing a short message for their peers (in the form of text, a social media post, video...) that would warn them of the dangers of the misuse of science, pseudoscience, and unreliable sources of information.
3. Groups present their messages.



90-Minute Workshop Procedures

Activity 1

How to distinguish between scientific and pseudoscientific arguments?

the same steps as for the 45-minute workshop

Activity 2

Where and how are pseudoscientific arguments used?

1. Students are shown a video clip [How the media cures our ills?](#) and asked to recognize strategies employed by the media (on social media, in the

digital environment...) to get people to use certain health practices.

2. The facilitator invites the students to share the examples of the strategies they have encountered in the media and writes them down on the board/a large sheet of paper. They are especially encouraged to list the things they find characteristic for their age group.
3. A discussion: to what end are such strategies used and who do they target.
4. The facilitator invites the students to share some reliable and unreliable sources of information, as well as to say how they are different. The facilitator writes down the features of both types of sources on the board/a large sheet of paper.
5. Students and the facilitators summarize the key features of reliable and unreliable sources together.

Activity 3

Designing a promotional message for peers

the same steps as for the 45-minute workshop



Methods

Work in small groups (of three or four students), with guided discussion with all students



Materials

→ 2-3 printed advertising/news texts in which some unproven health practice is being presented (e.g. [Kinoki detox patches](#), [PentActive Neo Bracelet](#))

→ A sheet with questions

First, answer these questions about the text: What is the text about?; What did the author want to accomplish?; What do they use to persuade the reader?; What does the author promise will be the result of using this product? Why exactly do they promise that?; What strategies are employed by the media to persuade consumers to use

something? Examples.; How do we know Kinoki patches are effective for detoxification? How convinced are you that detoxification is beneficial for health?; What piece of information or argument would make the text more credible?; What sources of information does the text mention?; Who is the author of the text?; Are the sources competent to make such claims? Why not? Examples.

- Two-minute video clip [How the media cures our ills?](#), created as a result of the project
- [A generator of random media stories](#) about traditional, complementary and alternative medicine, created as a result of the project



Equipment and Tools

A board or 1-3 large sheets of paper and colored markers

A computer, speakers, and a projector