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A Germ's Journey

BY [SFAM](#) on [MARCH 6, 2018](#) • [\(1 \)](#)

Katie Laird, Senior Lecturer in Microbiology at Leicester School of Pharmacy writes about her latest project

A Germ's Journey educational resources is a project centred on teaching young children the importance of health hygiene, in particular handwashing and how this links to disease.

As a microbiologist and a mother to two young children 'A Germ's Journey' is particularly close to my heart, nearly six years ago, I had mischievous little boy who thought toilets were the perfect playground for his toy cars, then the potty training began! It was then I realised there were very limited books and resources to teach young children about 'germs' and the importance of handwashing.

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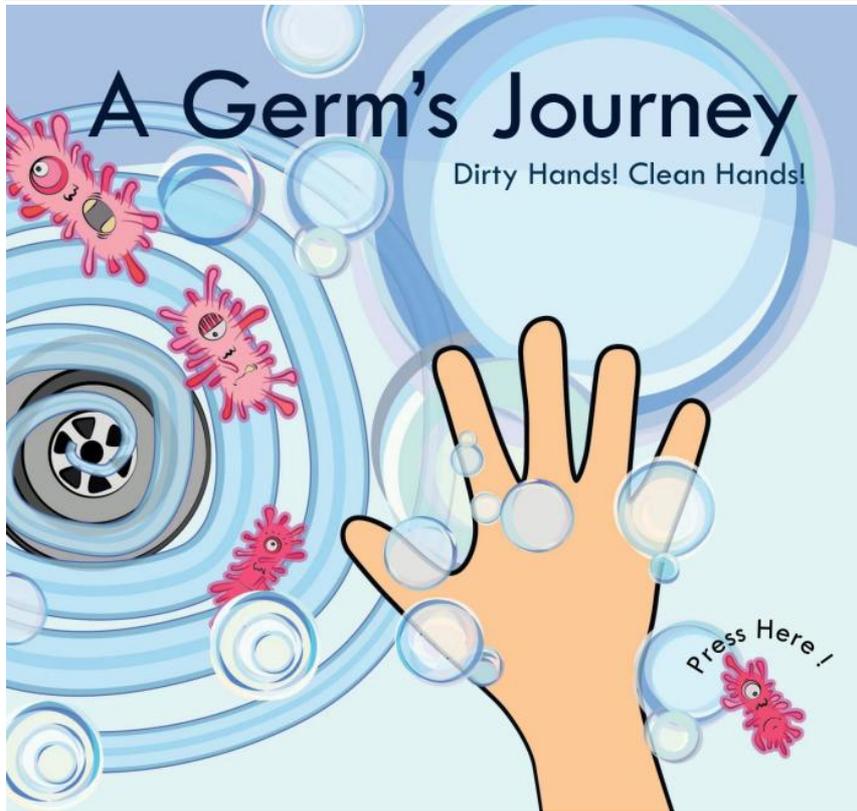
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Building a team

I knew that teaching children from 3-5 years about the 'invisible germ' was going to be difficult. I needed to build a team including someone who understood how young children learn and how to put a message across to them.

I also needed someone who could draw! I contacted Professor Sarah Younie, an educationalist and used an De Montfort University intern scheme to find an art student (Charlie Evans) and the 'Germ's Journey' team was born.

We applied for an Educational Resources Grant from SfAM which was successful and created a colourful board book, 'A Germ's Journey, Dirty Hands, Clean Hands' that tells the story of a germ from the toilet, to the tummy and back up again! And the importance of handwashing.



Rub it and see

Thermochromic paint that disappears when you press/rub it reveals the germs thus putting across the difficult concept of the 'invisible germ' the book also includes a 'find the germs game' and a parent guide.

In addition, an [interactive website](#) was also created. A thousand books were donated to schools, community centres, local education authorities (LEAs) both in the UK and in India.

Research has been conducted on the interactive 'A Germ's Journey' workshops and resources as educational interventions, papers are to be published later in the year. The Early Years Educator Magazine also featured our resources, please see our [You Tube Video](#) for an overview of the project.

Water Aid have adopted "A Germ's Journey" in their UK educational programs, Warwickshire and Leicestershire LEAs and the School and Public Health Nurses Association also support the project and promote the book for use in schools.



Global reach

The project has been a great success, and developed very rapidly.

The latest project is 'A Germ's Journey Around the World' it has meant we have had to expand the team including a Web designer, PhD student and a team of art, literature and media student volunteers.

We are creating a platform where there are a range of handwashing educational resources that are free at the point of access for teachers, children and healthcare workers around the world.

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All of the resources are culturally relevant and stakeholders have been involved in the designs, this includes posters and parent/teacher guides for the UK, India, West Africa and the Middle East.



Sing it loud

In a cross-community project, a handwashing song/video created by the Anganwadi Teachers & the Environmental Sanitation Institute Sabarmati Gandhi Ashram, is being translated and a media video is being created for teachers and school nurses both in the UK and India. The video/song is also going to be used in refugee camps using mobile tablets, starting with the Rohingya in Bangladesh.

Lastly, we are trying to re-create our health hygiene book, 'A Germs Journey' in Gujarati, the book will be used in heavily deprived areas of the Gujarati region in Ahmedabad, India. The book will be distributed to community centres, schools, village libraries and healthcare facilities within the areas that are most affected by deprivation in order to educate children on the importance of handwashing hygiene.



Get on board!

We are also asking the children to participate by creating a drawing to be included in the book! The understanding of germs, the spread of infectious disease and the importance of handwashing can be lifesaving skill for children in these areas.

We are trying to achieve the funds for this project [through crowdfunding](#) if you are interested in contributing to this project it would be much appreciated.

Finally keep your eye out for our “Germ’s Journey” book on antimicrobial resistance for 8-11-year olds later in the year!

Katie Laird

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Makayla P Messer

April 3, 2018 • 4:18 am

Why haven't these resources been expanded to the US? I know we aren't in a bad need of them but I think it would be very a very fun and beneficial experience to our children.

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