Aktuelle Meldung

Corona vaccinations: WHO trains specialists with German help
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With the support of the German Hasso Plattner Institute (HPI), the World Health Organization (WHO) has now begun training medical personnel from all member countries in rapid and safe vaccination against the coronavirus. The Geneva-based organization has launched a two-hour course in English on the OpenWHO Internet learning platform, which is provided and maintained by the Potsdam-based institute. The course is designed to provide the basic knowledge and skills needed to immediately vaccinate those at particular risk against Covid 19 disease - depending on the priority rules of the countries.

Not only health care workers, but anyone interested can access the now 267 total offerings on the OpenWHO platform after registering. These will soon include another course that provides instructions on how to develop national plans for vaccinations against the Corona virus, as well as a so-called knowledge base. The science-based information gathered in it, is intended to help leaders address events in their countries "that could undermine confidence in vaccination and accompanying communications."

"We are happy to have succeeded in enabling the WHO to directly reach and quickly train more than two million healthcare experts from all member countries in such courses using our platform technology," says HPI director Prof. Christoph Meinel. "Since December 2019, usage numbers have skyrocketed - to a good 4.6 million course enrollments now," the institute director reports. At a Hasso Plattner Institute conference in October 2020, the WHO spoke of an increase of around 2,000 percent. For the massively expanded use of the OpenWHO platform, the HPI servers have to "shoulder" 30,000 requests per minute at peak times.

Stress test passed with 2,000 percent growth

"The open online course offered by the World Organization passed this stress test during the pandemic, as did openHPI, our own learning platform that has existed for eight years and provides the technological basis," says the Potsdam computer scientist. Already on January 26, when the novel virus did not even yet have an official name, the first openWHO course on the disease was able to go online, says Meinel.

The director's team at HPI's Department of Internet Technologies and Systems also manages the helpdesk for the world organization. Since January, around 46,000 issues from OpenWHO users have been dealt with there. These include clarifying technical questions and solving problems. By comparison, in the entire previous year, there were only a good 600 inquiries.

For real-time training on Covid 19 disease management alone, there are now around 143 online courses on OpenWHO covering 20 different topics in 42 languages. It is striking that during the coronavirus pandemic, a relatively high proportion of seniors around the world have been using the World Health Organization's learning platform. According to OpenWHO's Heini Utunen, the percentage of people over the age of 70 taking relevant online courses is five percent. 70 percent are between 20 and 39 years old.

Covid 19 online courses are adjusted weekly in content

One third each of the participants are healthcare workers and students. The WHO cites India (22 percent), Ecuador (ten percent), the USA and Mexico (around five percent each), and Bangladesh (four percent) as the countries from which most users come.

"Practically every week, we adapt our content because of new scientific findings," Utunen said in October at the openHPI forum in Potsdam. The goal, she said, is to get from the current 42 language versions of the Covid 19 courses to 60. The free OpenWHO offerings can be used even if there is no Internet connection or one with only low bandwidth.

"We are pleased to be able to offer the World Health Organization reliable assistance in the challenging fight against the pandemic with our platform technology, which can be easily adapted to the surge demand," says HPI Director Meinel. Even frequent changes to the content of the courses that become necessary can be handled without any problems.

WHO Director-General: „Tremendous Performance"

WHO Director-General Tedros Adhanom Ghebreyesus took the opportunity on March 27 of this year to congratulate the one millionth OpenWHO enrollment via the short message service Twitter. The Ethiopian wrote: "This is a tremendous achievement." Repeatedly, Tedros referred in press conferences and on Twitter to the high importance of his organization's platform for professionals in health systems all over the world: "Knowledge is the key to advancing public health and defeating #COVID19," he tweeted.

Also at an Executive Board meeting, the director general praised the learning portal's contribution to pandemic response. It helps with infection prevention,

infection control, response planning and data collection, he said. The availability of courses in more than 40 languages is a commitment to multilingualism, the WHO chief said.

The partners OpenWHO and openHPI also recently received worldwide recognition with the "Learning Technologies Award 2020" in gold. The award was presented in London on November 18. The 61-member jury was particularly impressed with the rapid scalability of the platform technology. In total, more than 500 projects from over 300 countries had applied.

Background to the openHPI interactive education platform

The Hasso Plattner Institute launched its interactive Internet offerings as a pioneer among European scientific institutions on September 5, 2012 - on the platform https://open.hpi.de. Since then, it has offered free access to current university knowledge from the rapidly changing fields of information technology and innovation. So far, this has mainly been done in German, English and Chinese. In the fall of 2017, however, openHPI also offered online translation and subtitling of a course in eleven world languages for the first time. Meanwhile, more than 867,000 course enrollments have been registered on openHPI. More than 255,000 people from 180 countries belong to the platform's permanent user base. It is currently growing rapidly. For particularly successful participants in its "Massive Open Online Courses," or MOOCs for short, the institute has issued around 95,00 certificates to date. The openHPI annual program for 2021 includes numerous offerings for IT beginners and experts. The 70 courses offered in the past can also still be used in self-study - also free of charge. Students can now also receive credit points at their university for completing openHPI courses. Those who want to watch video lessons from the courses while on the go, even if no Internet connection is guaranteed (for example, on an airplane), can also use the openHPI app for Android mobile devices, iPhones or iPads.