

BETWEEN ART AND MEDICINE, THE DISCREET CHARM OF THE INTESTINE

Motivation and philosophy behind the exhibition

The **intestine**, an organ often neglected and abused, might be linked to the insurgence of **weight problems, depression, diabetes, and skin diseases**. So, what do we know about this organ?

At the **master program i-Santé** of the UJM University of Saint-Etienne, students learn about **biology, biomedicine and tissue engineering**. Their studies are fuelled by a combination of scientific curiosity and the desire to learn skills for a specialised job market. For a future either in research or in a professional setting, **outreach and communication** to the public are important transferable skills that should also be developed. Through this exhibition, we tried to develop and practice those skills, while answering the above question: what do we know about the gut?

The i-Santé Master students were asked to dig into some details of the inner workings of the intestine and to display their findings in an approachable way. The challenge was to present their topic in a captivating way for both the general public and, at least in part, for a more specialised audience on the scientific and medical campuses.

Students were given "carte blanche" on the specific subject, as long as it had something to do with the gut. They chose to investigate and present very different themes, ranging from the importance of our **intestinal flora** (our gut microbiota) to the causes of **inflammatory chronic diseases** of the intestine, from the mechanisms that trigger and control **vomiting** to the effects of **alcohol** on our intestine; others delved into the impact of **intestinal parasites**, the **interactions between the intestine and our immune system** or those between the **brain and the gut**.

The attempts of our students to explain more or less obscure details of the physiology and pathology of the digestive tract echo the success of the best-seller "Le charme discret de l'intestin - tout sour un organ mal aimé / **Gut: The Inside Story of Our Body's Most Underrated Organ**", by **Giulia Enders**. The German book, published in more than 25 countries, has sold 500 000 copies in France. If the reader appreciates the scientific information imparted by the author with a fresh and amusing style, part of the success of the book comes from the **engaging illustrations by Jill Enders**.

We asked this young artist the permission to use her artwork to mirror and complement the topics chosen by the students. She accepted very enthusiastically, sending us eleven drawings from the book. This has allowed us to build an **exhibition that combines science, art and books**, in collaboration with the highly motivated and dedicated teams of the University Libraries at campus Santé and Tréfilerie. Our exhibition will tour in the four University Libraries between April and June explaining us the secrets and beauty of the gut.

We welcome you to the exhibition and we invite you to stroll among the posters, enjoy the drawings, browse through the books that our librarians picked out from the library shelves. We hope that you might learn something interesting and relevant to you and that you will be charmed by the mysteries of the inner workings of this wonderful organ in our body.

Maura Strigini and the students of the master program M1 i-Santé (2016-2017)