

TITLE: LA MICRO PODCAST: AN INITIATIVE TO BOTH MAKE POPULAR SCIENCE AND TEACH MICROBIOLOGY

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ABSTRACT:

The biggest part of scientific knowledge is still confined to the academic community. To change this reality, the development of popular science actions should be an obligation to research institutes and universities. Microorganisms are present in the everyday routine and have huge implications in human health and well-being. However, given their small dimensions they aren't very known amongst general population. Moreover, an increasing circulation of imprecise and/or fallacious information about them has been observed in the last few years. Therefore, the Academic League of Microbiology (LA Micro) of UNIFENAS launched the LA Micro Podcast (anchor.fm/la-micro-podcast), a project intended to demystify and broadcast, in a clear and comprehensible manner, microbiology-related topics. A podcast is analogous to a radio program, but done over the internet, which allows it to be listened at any time and any place. Since October 2020, members of LA Micro have gathered, recorded, and edited, monthly, podcast episodes discussing news, advancements, and curiosities regarding the microbiology. Episodes are made available on eight different audio streaming services. Eventually, external guests engage in the production process of specific episodes to enhance the content with their own professional experience in the field. Up to the day of the submission of this abstract, eleven episodes had already been released and reached over 200 listeners. Beyond being a strategy of making popular science, the LA Micro Podcast also works as an active learning methodology for undergraduate students. After students in charge of a particular episode select a topic, they perform a bibliographic review and debate it as a group, making bridges with their previous knowledge and experiences. Furthermore, after a new episode becomes available, students keep track on questions and feedback given by audience and answer them accordingly. In this way, as the LA Micro Podcast fulfills its objective of being a popular science initiative among a worrying trend of scientific denial, it also allows its members to strengthen their knowledge on specific subjects which are not generally discussed in regular classes.

Keywords: popular science, microbiology, podcast.

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