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Media Relations

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Annika Frahsa becomes Lindenhof Endowed Professor of Community Health

Annika Frahsa has been chosen Lindenhof Foundation Professor of Community Health by the University Executive Board. The assistant professorship has been made possible thanks to support from the Lindenhof Foundation Bern. It focuses on participatory health promotion involving communities and is one of a kind in Switzerland.

The public health sector and modern healthcare systems are facing growing challenges. These include ongoing demographic shifts such as changes in age structure, urbanization and migration, as well as changing expectations of societal institutions, and the ways health promotion, disease prevention and care are organized.

With the help of the Lindenhof Foundation Bern, an endowed professorship was established in 2018 at the Institute of Social and Preventive Medicine (ISPM), which will primarily use social science theories and methods to research the social processes surrounding healthcare systems and represent them in teaching. "Against the backdrop of increasingly complex challenges, there is a need for new approaches in research and teaching in the field of public health. The Lindenhof Endowed Professorship in Community Health is a decisive step in this direction," says Prof. Thomas Abel of ISPM, who was instrumental in establishing it.

The endowed professorship is set to run for 10 years and is funded by the Lindenhof Foundation Bern with a sum of five million Swiss francs. Now that the professorship has been filled, the University Executive Board has appointed Annika Frahsa for an initial term of four years as Assistant Professor of Community Health, as of May 1, 2021.

Expert with extensive policy experience

Annika Frahsa graduated with a degree in political science (Dipl. Pol.) in 2006 and obtained her doctorate in sports science from the Friedrich-Alexander University of Erlangen-Nuremberg in 2013. Most recently, she submitted her habilitation thesis at Eberhard Karls Universität Tübingen, with the department of social and health sciences of sport.

Prof. Frahsa's research has been funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation SNF, the German Federal Ministry of Health (BMG), and health insurance companies, among others. She serves as a member of the advisory board on physical activity promotion at the German Ministry of

Health and a process consultant for municipalities within the national program on building health promotion structures by the German Federal Centre for Health Education, and has frequently cooperated with the World Health Organization (WHO).

Unique in Switzerland

"The university considers itself fortunate to now have an important and previously missing element in the field of health research with this professorship. Health and medicine is a recognized focus of the University's strategy, to which the Lindenhof Foundation Bern has made an innovative contribution," says Christian Leumann, Rector of the University of Bern. "We believe that this professorship holds great potential for advancing the field of community health, which has received little attention so far."

"The appointment of Prof. Frahsa, an excellent researcher and lecturer in political science and sports science, opens up numerous opportunities for interdisciplinary collaboration," adds Claudio Bassetti, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine. Overlap arises, for example, with sports science, psychology, or at the University of Bern's Centre for Development and Environment (CDE), in order to improve living conditions in urban neighborhoods, both locally and globally. "This results in a very promising research approach that makes the endowed professorship unique in Switzerland," says Bassetti.

Active cooperation of the population

For over a century, the Lindenhof Foundation Bern has been committed to charitable and the humanitarian sector. It promotes health, education, teaching and research and is, a partner of the Swiss Red Cross (SRC), among others. Since 2013, the foundation has been funding projects from teaching and research in the field of medicine and nursing, thus providing a valuable contribution to Bern's development as a center for medicine. "It is our goal to use innovation to improve public health and healthcare services for the population," says Marianne Sonder, President of the Lindenhof Foundation Bern. "The field of community health is still under established in Switzerland. In the pandemic, we saw how important people's active participation is to keep an entire society healthy," Marianne Sonder believes. With the professorship, the foundation now wants to facilitate research and teaching on participatory health promotion involving the general public.

See more about Annika Frahsa and contact details on the next page.

About Annika Frahsa

Annika Frahsa began her education at FAU Erlangen Nuremberg, Germany, and spent an exchange year in Canada at McGill University Montreal. In 2006, she completed her studies in political science and in 2013 she obtained her doctorate in sports science from FAU on the processes and effects of participatory approaches in exercise-oriented health promotion. At the Institute of Sport Science and Sport there, she was a research assistant from 2006 to 2018. She was responsible for nationwide projects of the German Federal Ministry of Education and Research, the Federal Ministry of Health as well as international EU projects, in which she coordinated activities of numerous national and international research institutions. She collaborated with the University of Bern from 2017-2020 as part of the NRP74 project MIWOCA (Migrant Women's Health Care Needs for Chronic Illness Services in Switzerland), which was funded by the Swiss National Science Foundation. In 2018, Frahsa moved to the Eberhard Karls University of Tübingen, where she submitted her habilitation thesis with the department of social and health sciences of sport.

Her research interests include social determinants of health and health disparities, novel approaches to knowledge co-creation, and healthy environments, including community and policy interventions for health-promoting resilient cities. Annika Frahsa is the recipient of various grants and awards and is a member of the advisory committee on physical activity promotion at the Federal Ministry of Health and of the program committee 'participation' of the Public Health Conference Poverty and Health.

Contact:

Media Relations, University of Bern

Tel. +41 31 684 41 42 / medien@unibe.ch