

PRESS RELEASE

Real-time study PULS! launches: How do crises affect our health?

Data4Life and the Center for Preventive Medicine and Digital Health at the Medical Faculty Mannheim, Heidelberg University, are jointly launching a nationwide digital population study on the health consequences of crises

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Heat waves, pandemics, power outages or political conflicts – crises of this kind have a significant impact on people's health. Yet there is still a lack of real-time data on how such events affect physical, mental and social well-being. This is precisely where the PULS! study comes in. The study is currently being launched in Baden-Württemberg.

PULS!, short for "Population-based Survey on Living Conditions and Social Health", is a digital, population-based longitudinal study conducted by the Center for Preventive Medicine and Digital Health (CPD) at the Medical Faculty Mannheim, Heidelberg University. The technical infrastructure for digital data collection is provided by the non-profit healthtech organization Data4Life through its D4L Collect study platform.

Capturing health in real time

The aim of the study is to record the health consequences of crisis events prospectively and in real time, rather than reconstructing them afterwards. If a heat wave sweeps across Germany in summer, participants can be surveyed while the event is still ongoing: How are they sleeping? How much stress are they experiencing? Is their physical activity changing? It is precisely this proximity to the event that makes the data particularly valuable from a scientific perspective.

Over a period of two years, participants will regularly take part in short smartphone surveys: a comprehensive initial questionnaire, quarterly follow-up surveys and additional event-driven questionnaires that can be activated in acute crisis situations such as heat waves, power outages or local outbreaks of infection.

The surveys capture physical, mental and social health, health-related behavior, social integration, perceptions of the current situation and responses to potential crisis measures. The data collected is intended to support the development of evidence-based prevention measures and help prepare public healthcare services more effectively for crisis situations.

The study received a favourable opinion from Ethics Committee II of Heidelberg University at the Medical Faculty Mannheim and is funded from CPD's own resources.

Digital study infrastructure as a key element

For its technical implementation, PULS! uses Data4Life's D4L Collect study platform. from Data4Life. The platform enables the structured, GDPR-compliant collection of health data using the D4L Collect smartphone app and supports digital consent management, secure, encrypted data transmission and a scalable software architecture for event-driven longitudinal surveys. The study data is stored on Heidelberg University servers in Germany. Data4Life acts exclusively as a technical service provider; responsibility for the content and scientific aspects of the study lies with CPD as the study lead and data controller.

"PULS! shows how digital study infrastructure enables public health research that was previously extremely difficult to implement from a technical perspective: prospectively, population-centred, scalable and in real time. With D4L Collect, we provide the platform that enables CPD Mannheim to ask and answer these complex research questions," says Ben Illigens, CEO of Data4Life.

About Data4Life

Data4Life develops open science solutions for real-world health data, serving academia, pharmaceutical research, and global health authorities. Through our solutions D4L Collect and Data2Evidence, we support the full workflow from real-world data capture and standardization to evidence generation, built on standards including OMOP and FHIR.

Data4Life co-leads the OHDSI Germany national node and collaborates with research institutions worldwide to advance standards-based, reproducible real-world evidence generation. In collaboration with world-leading partners, we enable cross-border studies and turn distributed health data into analysis-ready insights, without compromising data privacy or institutional sovereignty.

Data4Life is a nonprofit digital health organization supported by the Hasso Plattner Foundation. Founded in 2017, our work is guided by a long-term commitment to impact, ethical data use, and open science collaboration. Data4Life is headquartered in Potsdam, Germany, with additional offices in Berlin, Germany, and Singapore.

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Research institutions that would like to conduct digital studies with D4LCollect are kindly asked to contact us by email at: b2b@data4life.care or find further information at www.data4life.care