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Keynote: Woodland – an effective remedy? Myth vs. evidence-based medicine

Abstract: Modern-day humans are the product of a hominid evolutionary process lasting millions of years that has played out in natural surroundings. We interact with nature as part of a functional physiological and psychological cycle to which we are adapted biologically. Contact with natural environments has been shown to have a positive effect on people's health. In medical circles, conscious proximity to nature is increasingly seen as an important therapeutic remedy against the backdrop of more and more heavily urbanised societies and the various chronic and lifestyle diseases that affect people living in them.

As one of a diverse range of natural spaces, woodland has a very specific effect, as substances produced by trees can help to regulate the human immune system.

What is the current state of scientific knowledge on forest therapy?

Are statements on the therapeutic efficacy of forest therapy evidence-based and meaningful?

What sorts of medical studies are currently being carried out on this range of topics?

Besides woodland, are there other natural environments that have a comparable effect?

Is it woodland itself or the act of moving through woodland that has a positive impact on health?

Arnulf Hartl's lecture focuses on these questions and aims to critically analyse the myths surrounding woodland by taking a scientific, medical-evidence-based viewpoint.