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Title of presentation: The Heringsdorf Waldapotheke “forest pharmacy”

Abstract: Ostseebad Heringsdorf local authority on the island of Usedom played a pioneering role in the implementation of a project entitled “Development of the curative and therapeutic forest and its use in therapy”.

The development of the 187 hectares of woodland takes its cue from the use of the forest in the past. References to the unique combination of forest and seaside climate date back as far as 1900 (escape the city to a summer retreat: racecourse, tennis courts, network of forest tracks, and recreational spaces).

The Alte Welt area of Heringsdorf forest has a dense network of trails of various levels of difficulty and lengths thanks to its diverse topography (structure of the terrain). It also stands out for a tree stock including pine (e.g. release of essential oils by coniferous trees) and beech, as well as a mild, bracing climate with varying bioclimatic intensity (sea breezes). Therapy information boards in the therapeutic forest provide details of four specific indications: respiratory, cardiovascular, orthopaedic and psychosomatic conditions.

NEW: The features of Heringsdorf’s coastal forest are being exploited for therapeutic purposes for the first time.

Short imaginary guided tour of Heringsdorf forest:

- Motor skills path among the beech trees
- Meditative exercise therapy in changing patterns of light and shadow
- Haven of tranquillity
- Climate-based exercise therapy

Initial results from the use of the indication-based therapeutic forest show that people consciously visit the forest for health purposes, and the woodland is being “rediscovered”. It has been widely used since it opened and its popularity is growing.

Guests and holidaymakers visiting our coastal spa were surprised by the idea of receiving therapy among beech and pine trees. We carried out a small survey which showed that 40% of respondents were absolutely convinced that the forest was beneficial for health, 13% definitely wanted to use the forest during their stay and 5% had looked for information (forest app, press and TV) before arriving.



The outcomes of an open pilot study of forest therapy for patients with chronic obstructive pulmonary disease at the Usedom rehab clinic in Heringsdorf underlined the fact that the forest's use in a therapy module was very important and supported the recovery process.

FOREST VISIT ON PRESCRIPTION? A NEW OPPORTUNITY?

The development of the Heringsdorf therapeutic/curative forest reflects nature itself – an open-ended process that generates a host of new insights. In the past few months, there has been increased interest in using the potential health-related benefits of the forest to treat children. Obtaining additional certification for the therapeutic forest and offering a range of services related to child health, rehabilitation and preventive medicine are therefore under consideration.

This could potentially enable us to capitalise on "a broad field" of treatments, in the words of poet Theodor Fontane, who himself visited Heringsdorf forest.