Introduction

Psychobiotics are probiotics or prebiotics that stimulate certain populations of microorganisms capable of having an effect on the nervous system and they are of psychiatric interest. The creation of an explanatory model is of academic and social interest, since it aims to raise awareness of a current and novel subject that can provide professional guidance to secondary school students and improve society’s vision of microorganisms. In order to accomplish these objectives, the model should be exhibited at schools or scientific institutions (such as museums). Thus, by raising awareness of the psychobiotics, the microbial world could increase its interest towards them, as well as creating a positive vision towards bacteria.

Methodology

Explanation of what psychobiotics are and how they work. Psychobiotics are probiotics or prebiotics that when ingested generate a beneficial effect on the nervous system. To generate this effect, the substances created by the microorganisms must be absorbed in the intestines and transported by the Gut-Brain Axis, which is a bi-directional communication mediated by endocrine mediators, immune mediators and neurotransmitters (1, 2, 3).

Examples of microorganisms with psychobiotic potential (7, 8, 9):

- *Bifidobacterium*: It is capable of generating anti-inflammatory (stress reduction), GABA (gamma aminobutyric acid; reduces depression and anxiety) and serotonin which generates a feeling of happiness and well-being.
- *Escherichia coli*: It generates serotonin and dopamine, which slightly regulates memory and generates a feeling of well-being.
- *Enterococcus*: Generates serotonin and GABA.
- *Lactobacillus*: It is the most interesting species for psychobiotic research. It is capable of generating: GABA, acetylcholine (which improves cognition processes), anti-inflammatory and serotonin.

Elaboration of model in academic fields and subsequent survey.

Presentation of the model in non-academic areas and subsequent survey.

Explanation of how psychobiotics work. To understand this, the intestine, the villi and the microvilli, where the substances are absorbed, are represented. Some of these substances, through the Gut-Brain Axis, are able to reach the Nervous System where they interact with neurons causing an effect (4).

Academic survey of students between 3rd of ESO (year 10) and 2nd of Baccalauréat (year 15).

Opinion survey about microorganisms in non-academic fields.

Elaboration of model, QR code and informative cards.

Results

Assessing the results obtained in the post-surveys, they have proved that the model has been useful to understand the concepts discussed and to increase the interest of the students in the Microbiology field (Figure 5). At the end of the presentation, the students had a critical view of the beneficial activities of the microorganisms, which they had previously been unaware of. On the other hand, the effect of the QR code on non-specialized people showed that many people were surprised to learn about the importance of microorganisms and its new beneficial use in human health (Figure 6).

Discussion

The explanatory model of psychobiotics is designed to clarify and make known a new beneficial use of microorganisms: psychobiotics. The scope of application is mainly based on academic fields, although it is a current and interesting topic that may be of interest to other people in non-academic fields. Thus, knowledge of psychobiotics can have a positive impact and give a positive view of microorganisms to the population. Likewise, the interest that the project has generated in the students will help them have a more concrete vision of the world of Microbiology and guide them slightly in their academic fields.

Acknowledgement: I would like to express my deepest gratitude to Josep Anton Genquesa Private Foundation for providing me with the necessary resources to study the degree in Microbiology and do my DFD. In addition, I would like to thank all of the teachers (Maria José Pascual Sabaté, Victoria Clos Guillén, Esther Julián Gómez and Daniel Yero Corona) and the institutions (San Ermengol School and UAB) that have helped me in the dissemination of this project. I am indebted to my family and friends for all the help and support throughout this journey, especially Carles Calabuig Sams and Noemi Fermas Carletto, without whom the project would have never continued. I wish to give my sincere gratitude to everybody who contributed both directly and indirectly towards this project.