

„Mrs Maar, want to join me?“



Kissed awake by good March weather, the first blossoms sprout on the bushes in Munich as I picked up Christa Maar, founder of the [Felix Burda Foundation](#), to take her for a walk as part of our series "Will you join me?" For almost two decades she has been fighting for the prevention and early detection of colorectal cancer. It is a commitment that inspires. Above all, because it is based on a very personal fate. Asked about her motivation, she suddenly stops on the street, spreads her arms and says: "Anger! A great anger motivates me". Short silence.

"You know, anger can release an incredible energy and I use it for my work," she says seriously, but looking more determined than angry. Since her son Felix Burda died of colorectal cancer in 2001, she has been tirelessly spreading the same message around the world: colorectal cancer can be prevented completely by screening. In addition, this type of cancer can be cured at an early stage. Theoretically, no one would have to die from it. So Christa Maar is angry that, with all these arguments and the great opportunities for prevention and early detection, colorectal cancer is still one of the second most common cancers in Germany.

130,000 lives

But then she talks about one of her greatest successes: "In the first year of the Felix Burda Foundation, we, together with our partners, launched the colorectal cancer month of March in Germany. With a large-scale information campaign - supported by celebrities and the magazines of Hubert Burda Media - we tried to remove the taboo from the topic and bring it into the focus of the public. A few months later, public health insurance actually included colonoscopy for insured persons aged 55 and over in its catalogue of benefits. Since then, 130,000 deaths and 270,000 illnesses have been prevented." A satisfied smile passes over her face as she talks about this.

Many cities have fewer inhabitants

We are now sitting in a café and the number of deaths prevented still echoes in my head: 130,000 – whole cities like Berkeley (US) or Cambridge (UK) have fewer inhabitants. Then I casually throw out the question: "Then you have already achieved so much and could now devote yourself to other things as well".

"I won't stop until no one dies of colorectal cancer anymore," Christa Maar answers smilingly, but definitely. Although German public health insurance covers preventive colonoscopies for elderly people, the 20- to 35-year-old age group also has an increased risk of developing this cancer: "No one is too young for bowel cancer - that's the slogan of our current campaign," she explains, continuing: "Family members of people with a history of bowel cancer have a three-fold increase in the risk of developing this disease. Families need to talk about a possible risk. This is why the Felix Burda Foundation has launched the Bavaria-wide model project FARKOR, which aims to improve the care of people with a family history of colon cancer.

Doctors also need to be more aware of this issue. The first symptoms of intestinal cancer, for example blood in the stool, are still too often confused with haemorrhoids. "That also makes me angry, valuable time passes for the patient!" She energetically taps the table twice with her index finger while saying that. The coffee cup clatters a little.

Telling and listening to stories

Mrs Maar has not spent her entire life dealing with such medical issues. However, the doctor of art history and filmmaker has always told stories that touch people. With her work for the foundation, she also tells stories in a certain way. Above all, she offers people a platform for telling their own stories. At the *Felix Burda Award*, people who tell of their fate with this disease also appear on stage: "Last year, Claudia Liane Neumann, winner of the *Ehrenfelix* ("Felix of Honour"), gave a passionate speech while Federal Health Minister Jens Spahn sat in front of her in the audience. She spoke out for young people who become infertile due to chemotherapy as a result of cancer. Egg freezing costs 5,000 euros and is not covered by health insurance - not everyone can afford it. Neumann approached Spahn directly from the stage. He rose from his chair and promised her in front of all guests that he would take care of it. Now insurances will soon take over this service", Mrs Maar remembers.

Constantly moving

In the meantime we have arrived back at her office and are already being received by her secretary, who has entered various appointments in Mrs Maar's calendar in the past hour. After all, it is the colorectal cancer month of March - high season for the Felix Burda Foundation. Before I say goodbye, I take a look at the tentatively blossoming shrub that glows pink in front of Mrs Maar's office window. But she herself has no time for it now and is already on the move again. Moves things. Ensures that bowel cancer doesn't have to be a final fate.

by **Saki Athanassios Danoglidis**

Senior Editor - Corporate Communications

Athanassios.Danoglidis@burda.com



Category **Company**

Tags **Christa Maar, Darmkrebs, Darmkrebsvorsorge, Felix Burda, Felix Burda Award, Felix Burda Foundation, Foundation, Patientenhilfe Darmkrebs**

URL <https://www.burda.com/en/news/mrs-maar-want-join-me/>