

English

Français

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1. GENERAL INFORMATION

The postgraduate course in Tropical Medicine and International Health provides health professionals with a broad and interdisciplinary training. It combines clinical and biomedical knowledge and skills with a systemic approach to health care organisation and disease control. The broad perspective of international health policy and specific inputs from social sciences will help students grasp the complex picture of health and health care in low-resource settings. The integration of these different disciplines is a key feature of the programme.

For most students, this course will be the start of a challenging career in international health, while for others, who already have experience working in low and middle income countries, it offers the broad perspective needed before specialising. Through its new flexible structure in two modules, the course meets the needs of both groups. Students can register for the whole programme or for selected modules.

The full course runs from September until February and is organised each year simultaneously in English and French. It is an intensive, full-time training, bringing together health professionals from both North and South. The lecturers have extensive experience overseas and come from all departments of the ITM as well as from external institutions. Their field experience and scientific work feeds extensively into the course.

2. PROGRAMME

Module 1: Introduction to International Health (13 weeks – 20 credits).

The first three weeks the students are taken through the basic concepts and methods in public health, epidemiology and statistics, socio-anthropology and international health policy.

After these introductory weeks the first three thematic blocks take health problems as an entry point for discussion of important international health issues.

Block 1: Integrated TB care

Block 2: Vector-borne diseases: a comprehensive approach to prevention and case management

Block 3: HIV/AIDS: from patient to policy

The subsequent four blocks address the provision of health care for specific social groups and a population in general

- Block 4: Safe Motherhood: a complex problem requiring a systemic approach
- Block 5: Targeting health of the next generation
- Block 6: Health care organisation in emergency situations
- Block 7: Health care delivery systems for defined populations

They offer a challenging opportunity to integrate the perspectives of different disciplines. At the same time all these blocks illustrate the application of the concepts and methods introduced during the first 3 weeks of the course. Subjects taught include: biomedical and clinical sciences, epidemiology, statistics, disease control, social sciences, health economics, public health and international health policy.

Module 1 also helps students develop basic skills such as appreciating laboratory results, critical reading of scientific publications and application of basic statistical and epidemiological methods and tools.

Finally, two major assignments challenge students to integrate acquired knowledge and skills. In the first assignment (7 weeks), students design a disease control programme applying the 'vertical analysis' methodology. This exercise enables them to analyse a health problem in a systematic way and deal critically with information. The result is the proposal of disease control strategies for a specific health problem.

The second assignment, (the last 6 weeks), takes the perspective of patients and communities as a starting point for organising health care services and includes a desk- and a field-based component. Students develop a better understanding of the factors underlying health seeking behaviour, health service utilisation and acquire insights into the implications for the organisation of health care.

Both assignments are organised as coached team work.

All these study units (the three week introduction, the 7 blocks and the assignments) are compulsory.

LEARNING OUTCOMES MODULE 1

At the end of the module, the student should be able to:

- understand determinants of health in general and of health care seeking behaviour in particular;
- master the main biomedical, clinical and epidemiological aspects of some of the major health problems in developing countries;
- organise primary health care services taking into account local priorities and resource availability as well as the perspective of communities and patients;
- understand the major issues in international health policy and development cooperation;
- critically analyse disease control programmes, applying scientific tools and methods;
- collaborate professionally in multi-disciplinary teams.

Module 2: Clinical and biomedical sciences of tropical diseases.

It provides specialised training on tropical diseases for medical doctors, biomedical scientists and pharmacists. While most subjects are communal, some are taught as separate tracks for medical doctors on the one hand and biomedical scientists and pharmacists on the other.

Its main aim is to provide health professionals from non-tropical countries an additional training in the diagnosis and management of tropical diseases which are not or only minimally covered by university undergraduate curricula.

Common subjects are:

- descriptive tropical medicine including parasitology, entomology, vector control
- basic laboratory
- hospital hygiene

Subjects in the medical track

- analytical pathology
- dermatology
- analytical paediatrics
- gynaecology/obstetrics in resource-poor settings

Subjects in the biomedical track

- advanced laboratory
- advanced entomology
- introduction to data management

LEARNING OBJECTIVES MODULE 2

At the end of this module medical doctors and biomedical scientists/pharmacists should be able to

- master the biomedical, clinical and epidemiological features of tropical diseases;
- perform basic laboratory tests and interpret their results;
- demonstrate the application and adequate biological interpretation of the different relevant tests needed for the organisation of safe blood transfusions at a first referral level hospital;
- apply the basic principles of hospital hygiene and the main sterilisation techniques in low-resource settings.

LEARNING OBJECTIVES MODULE 2 (continued)

Specific learning objectives for doctors are:

- to master the diagnosis and management of gynaecological and obstetric problems in low-resource settings;
- to analyse a clinical picture in a given epidemiological context, interpreting the results of laboratory and technical examinations and integrating knowledge on the diagnostic value of clinical symptoms and signs to come up with the most appropriate differential diagnosis;
- to master the specific biomedical, clinical and epidemiological features of tropical diseases in children.

Specific learning objectives for biomedical scientists and pharmacists are:

- to perform additional/advanced laboratory tests and interpret their results;
- to analyse laboratory practices, evaluate the technical quality of a peripheral (HC & district hospital) laboratory and suggest appropriate strategies to improve the quality as well as mechanisms to ensure future improved quality;
- to evaluate the needs in terms of cost, infrastructure, consumables and manpower for common biological tests;
- to discuss different vector control strategies and their effectiveness according to the setting and to analyse the technical aspects of a vector control programme/strategy and illustrate how these can be researched.

3. TEACHING METHODS

The course uses a combination of state of the art lectures, interactive classes, individual study, coached team work and practical laboratory work.

4. EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATE

At the end of each module, theoretical and practical exams are organised. The theoretical exams consist of knowledge questions as well as integrated essay questions. Students who pass a module receive a credit certificate. Upon successful completion of both modules participants are awarded the ITM Postgraduate Certificate in Tropical Medicine and International Health. Biomedical scientists and pharmacists will be awarded the Postgraduate Certificate in Tropical Biomedical Sciences and International Health.

5. DURATION OF THE COURSE

The entire training programme (Module 1 + 2) lasts 5 months. Module 1 runs from **mid September until the start of the Christmas holidays in December (13 weeks)**. The second module starts early January and finishes by the end of February (7 weeks).

It is a full-time programme with a maximum of 24 contact hours per week. Students are expected to dedicate another 15 to 25 hours per week to personal study and the assignments.

