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(TM&IH)*for health professionals
holders of a university degree*

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 organization 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, students can register for the whole programme or for selected modules.

2. PROGRAMME

Module 1: Introduction to International Health (15 weeks, 20 credits)

The situation of health, health problems and health care in this fast moving, globalizing world is extremely diverse and difficult to capture with the language of medicine alone, both in terms of assessment of the situation and of action to be developed. Problems range from the rather simple, technical kind, where evidence is available on what to do, over more challenging ones such as dealing with human beings in healthcare organisations to the very complex processes of decision making at national and international policy levels, involving values, interests and power.

This first module offers a theoretical evidence-basis and a basic set of conceptual frameworks, models and tools to enable participants to analyse health problems at a population level and grasp the logic of the strategies to control them, to initiate them in planning and implementation of health care services and to introduce them to the specificity of care provision in low-resource settings ("medicine in the tropics versus tropical medicine").

The entire module is structured along the following 7 thematic blocks:

- 1) Vector-borne diseases: a comprehensive approach to prevention and control ;
- 2) Integrated TB care ;
- 3) HIV/AIDS: from patient to policy ;
- 4) Safe Motherhood: a complex problem requiring a systemic approach ;
- 5) Targeting health of the next generation ;
- 6) Health care organisation in emergency situations ;
- 7) Health care delivery systems for defined populations.

The thematic blocks are preceded by a 3-week introduction during which students are taught basic concepts and methods in public health, epidemiology and statistics, socio-anthropology and international health policy. The concepts and methods introduced during the first 3 weeks all find wide application within the blocks.

The first three thematic blocks take specific health problems as an entry point for the discussion of important international health issues, while the subsequent four blocks address the provision of health care for specific social groups, hence offering another challenging opportunity to integrate the perspectives of different disciplines, including biomedical and clinical sciences and disease control. Module 1 also helps students to develop basic skills in appreciating laboratory results, critical reading of scientific publications and applying basic statistical and epidemiological concepts and methods. Several assignments, organised as individual or coached group work, will challenge participants to integrate the acquired knowledge and skills.

All study units, i.e. the 3-week introduction, the 7 thematic blocks and the assignments, are compulsory.

Learning objectives of Module 1 :

At the end of the module students should be able to:

- discuss determinants of health in general and of health care seeking behavior in particular ;
- analyze the main biomedical, clinical and epidemiological aspects of the major health problems in developing countries in order to manage their prevention and control at population and individual level ;
- organize primary health care services taking into account local priorities and resource availability as well as the perspective of communities and patients ;
- describe the major issues in international health policy and development cooperation ;
- critically analyze disease control programs, applying scientific tools and methods ;
- collaborate professionally in multi-disciplinary teams.

Module 2: Clinical and biomedical sciences of tropical diseases (8 weeks-10 credits)

Module 2 provides a specialised training on tropical diseases 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, topics which are not or only minimally covered by university undergraduate curricula.

Programme of Module 2 for medical doctors:

descriptive pathology of tropical diseases; laboratory skills training focusing on tropical diseases and diagnostic tests available in low-resource settings; clinical decision-making; dermatology, ophthalmology, micronutrient deficiencies.

Learning objectives of Module 2 for medical doctors:

At the end of this module students should be able to:

- master the biomedical, clinical and epidemiological features of tropical diseases and micronutrient deficiencies ;
- perform basic laboratory tests and interpret their results ;
- rank the most appropriate diagnoses according to likelihood, explore a differential diagnosis and discuss clinical management in low and middle income countries through an in-depth analysis of the epidemiological context, clinical epidemiological findings, laboratory and imaging results, taking into account the scarcity of resources.

Programme of Module 2 for biomedical scientists and pharmacists: problem-based cases on tropical diseases and laboratory management; lectures on capita selecta; laboratory skills training.

Learning objectives of Module 2 for biomedical scientists and pharmacists:

At the end of this module students should be able to:

- describe the natural history of tropical diseases ;
- confer with clinicians on clinical cases ;
- manage a district laboratory in a low-resource setting.

3. TEACHING METHODS

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

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.

4. EVALUATION AND CERTIFICATE

At the end of module 1, theoretical exams are organised. The theoretical exams consist of multiple choice questions as well as integrated essay questions. At the end of module 2, theoretical (multiple choice) and oral exams are organised, as well as a practical laboratory exam. Students who pass a module receive a credit certificate. Upon successful completion of both modules medical doctors are awarded the ITM Postgraduate Certificate in Tropical Medicine and International Health and biomedical scientists and pharmacists 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 the second Monday of September until the start of the Christmas holidays in December (15 weeks). Module 2 starts early January and finishes by the end of February (8 weeks).

It is a full-time programme of 600 contact hours and students are expected to dedicate another 15 to 20 hours per week to personal study and group work.

6. LANGUAGE

The course is organised simultaneously in French and English.

For the English course, students for whom English is not their first language must provide evidence of a 6.5 IELTS score (or 580 TOEFL score). Exemption from this requirement may be granted to those who completed higher education in the English language.

Students attending the French course are expected to have passive knowledge of English to be able to read and understand English scientific literature, and therefore must equally provide an English assessment certificate.

Module 2 for biomedical scientists and pharmacists will only be taught in English.

7. ADMISSION REQUIREMENTS AND APPLICATION PROCEDURE

Applicants for Module 1 and 2 need a degree in Medicine or a university (master) degree (min 240 ECTS credits) in biomedical or pharmaceutical sciences. For Module 1 other health professionals, such as health economists and health sociologists, are welcome to apply on condition that they are holder of a university degree (min 240 ECTS credits, minimum 4 years of academic full-time training) and have a minimum of 2 years relevant professional experience in international health in low-or middle income countries.

For organisational purposes, a maximum of 50 students is admitted for each language. Places are allocated on a first-come, first-served basis.

Application forms can be downloaded from www.itg.be (teaching & training > course overview > postgraduate certificates) or can be obtained from the course secretariat. For deadlines, please consult the overview table of our brochure or on our website.

Module 1 is accredited as core module of the Master in International Health of the tropEd network. For medical doctors and biomedical/pharmaceutical scientists who wish to continue immediately after completing Module 1 with the Master training, at least two years of working experience in international health is a requirement. If the aim is to prepare for a first professional experience in international health no (relevant) professional is required.

8. TUITION FEE AND SCHOLARSHIPS

You will find information on the exact fee in the general ITM course overview table of our brochure or on our website www.itg.be (teaching & training > course overview).

There are no institutional scholarships for this course.

After approval of your application, the registration fee should be paid into the ITM's account nr. 220-0531111-72 (Fortis, Warandeborg 3, 1000 Brussel), BIC/SWIFT: GEBABEBB, IBAN BE 38 2200 5311 1172.

Belgian participants who wish to make use of 'opleidingscheques' to pay part of their tuition fee (www.opleidingscheques.vlaanderen.be) will be reimbursed later upon submission of the 'opleidingscheques'.

In case of non-participation due to events outside the applicant's control, the tuition fee less 15% for administrative costs can be refunded.