

Launch of a research network against epidemics in Africa

ITM is part of an international consortium preparing to fight 'Disease X'.

13-03-18



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'Disease X', an unknown disease the world must prepare itself for, has hit the headlines in recent days. This week, an international network was launched in the Ethiopian capital Addis Ababa. The network should be able to quickly respond with clinical research and interventions in case of an outbreak

The African coalItion for Epidemic Research, Response and Training ([ALERRT](#)) receives € 10 million from the [European and Developing Countries](#)

[Clinical Trials Partnership](#) (EDCTP). ITM Antwerp is one of the 21 African and European partner organisations this network.

"ALERRT tries to limit the damage caused by outbreaks of infectious diseases in Sub-Saharan Africa, in terms of health and on a socio-economic level," says Prof. Johan van Griensven of the ITM, speaking from Addis Abeba. This week, the [International Conference of \(Re-\)Emerging Infectious Diseases](#) will take place in the Ethiopian capital.

ALERRT will set up a sustainable clinical and laboratory network that can be operational in a very short time to carry out research to combat outbreaks of these diseases. The network is based on the strengths of leading institutions in nine African and four European countries and on a network of laboratories and clinics all over Sub-Saharan Africa. Together they can respond quickly to an outbreak.

The team of Prof. van Griensven tries to increase the clinical research capacity. "In the event of an outbreak of Disease X, we want to control the disease as quickly as possible, but also carry out clinical research into better diagnostics and treatments to reduce the mortality rate," says van Griensven. ITM will also focus on operational readiness and data management. We will create a framework that will enable us to handle administrative, regulatory and ethical bottlenecks. During the ebola outbreak in West Africa, these issues have considerably hampered our research."