

Royal couple visits the institute of tropical medicine

Spotlight on COVID-19 work.

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Dit is de omschrijving

King Filip and Queen Mathilde visited the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) in Antwerp today and focused on its response to COVID-19, medical services, research projects, training programmes, and the importance of international cooperation. The royal couple was welcomed by Cathy Berx, Governor of the Province of Antwerp, and Dr Marc-Alain Widdowson, Director of ITM.

The timing of this visit is no coincidence. For decades, the Institute has been in the frontline of the fight against global epidemics, including COVID-19. "ITM warmly welcomed their Majesties the King and Queen today. The royal couple showed great interest and appreciation for our efforts around COVID-19," Dr Widdowson said.

As soon as the virus emerged in our country, ITM's medical specialists volunteered to help the Antwerp University Hospital (UZA) with the screening and treatment of COVID-19 patients. In addition, ITM scientists are investigating the coronavirus in high-security laboratories and taking part in various national and international research projects, including studies on antibodies in health professionals and the impact of the virus on maternal and newborn health care.

ITM's Professor of Virology Kevin Ariën used a 3D model of the coronavirus and an antibody to illustrate the way the virus operates. The royal couple was fascinated by the scientific show-and-tell presentation and talked extensively with the scientists afterwards.

The importance of ITM's international partnerships was also discussed. Dr Widdowson explains: "It is essential that we keep monitoring the evolution of the virus and its impact on populations and health systems worldwide, together with our partners. After all, our strength lies in pooling our expertise and collaborating with all these different scientific institutions and executive agencies."

Finally, four international masters students and one doctorate student talked to the King and Queen about their reasons for choosing ITM and how they experienced the COVID-19 outbreak. Every year, more than 600 students from around the world come to the ITM to specialise in tropical medicine and international health.