

# New short course Pharmaceutical Policies in Health Systems

An exciting start towards promoting health equity

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Dit is de omschrijving

**Pharmaceutical public health is an emerging field in global health, which is pioneered by some academic institutions such as the University of Western Cape (South Africa), Boston University (US) and the Institute of Tropical Medicine in Antwerp (Belgium). Stakeholders such as policy makers, health system (and other) researchers, regulators etc., meet at the crossroad of pharmaceutical public health, where they build synergies, mutual learning and mutual guidance.**

The emergence of pharmaceutical public health is timely: more than ever, in the light of the COVID19 pandemic, it is made clear that the world of global health is in need of a generation of policy-makers who understand the relevance of coherent and integrated pharmaceutical systems. These systems are essential to provide equitable and affordable access to appropriately used essential medical products. This is a fundamental element for health systems, a pre-requisite to universal health coverage, and “a powerful means of promoting health equity”.

Our partners of the University of Western Cape (UWC) had already started a one-week course on pharmaceutical policies a few years ago. Working on the experience of this collaboration, the Institute of Tropical Medicine (ITM) started a new three-week short course on “Pharmaceutical Policies in Health Systems” in June 2021. This course was coordinated by Raffaella Ravinetto and Marjan Pirard, with the precious support of Hazel Bradley and Nondumiso Ncube from UWC.

The 18 students who attended the course came from four different continents, with a variety of backgrounds including academia, regulation, pharmacovigilance, supply, health insurance, international NGOs and development cooperation. The variety of origins allowed us to discuss different case-scenarios from high-, middle- and low-income countries, with a lot of mutual (South-South, South-North, North-North) learning. In addition, the blended learning model allowed us to optimize the involvement of the six students who participated online. While the combination of the ITM gardens with a well-planned sunny weather provided the ideal environment for the group work of those who were physically present.

Various teaching modules were given by ITM staff members: Jan Jacobs, Brecht Ingelbeen, Raffaella Ravinetto and Koen Peeters – who joined forces with his non-ITM research partners Patricia Kingori and René Gerrets. Furthermore, thanks to the network developed during the last decade, we counted on an amazing group of external lecturers, including a few well-known veterans of the struggle for equitable and efficient pharmaceutical systems: Els Torrelee, Wilbert Banneberg, Katrina Perehudoff and Cécile Macé; the lead author of the Lancet Commission Report on Essential Medicines, Veronika Wirtz; the former head of the Regulatory Authority in Sudan, Ghamal Khalafallah; Klara Tisocki and Kiu Siang Tay of the WHO Medicines and Health Products Pricing and Affordability Team; Céline Caillet from the group of Paul Newton in Oxford; and Jo Robays of Sciensano.

It was a very encouraging experience. All trainees were invited to join ITM Alumni, and they keep on exchanging and communicating among them and with lecturers – perhaps some research collaborations are being incubated now!