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ITM put AIDS on the map as an African heterosexual disease

The importance of the ITM in HIV and AIDS research cannot be overestimated. It is thanks to ITM that this disease was recognised as an African heterosexual disease that affects poor people.

The start of the 1980s saw the emergence of AIDS cases in homosexual men on the US west coast. Their resistance was typically entirely undermined. Spurred on by Peter Piot, the future head of the UN organisation UNAIDS, ITM researchers immediately began looking into this devastating new immune disease. They also exposed the African dimension of the disease. On that continent, as well as in other places in the South, HIV is primarily a heterosexual problem that affects poor people.

In 2011 AIDS researcher Marie Laga was honoured in the Senate as one of the country's 100 Exceptional Women.

Many of the foundations of worldwide research on AIDS and the HIV virus were laid in Antwerp. What's more, the ITM has been a medical services provider and a taboo-breaking champion of HIV-infected people in its own country for decades. People with HIV can to this day seek counselling and treatment in our HIV/STD outpatient clinic. Hundreds of doctors and students from throughout the entire world learned from the ITM how best to deal with HIV and AIDS. Since the 1980s, people such as Kevin Ariën, Bob Colebunders, Eric Florence, Katrien Fransen, Marie Laga, Lut Lynen, Peter Piot, Guido van der Groen and Guido Vanham have been the figureheads of ITM's commitment to HIV/AIDS research in the areas of virology, epidemiology, prevention, education, diagnosis, therapy and social issues.