

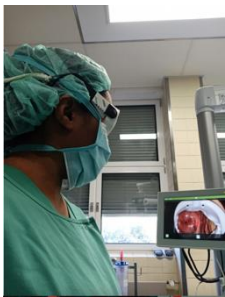
The Fusco group is 100% committed to the fight against Female genital schistosomiasis

Female Genital Schistosomiasis (FGS) is neglected among the neglected tropical diseases. The Fusco group in collaboration with the University of Fianarantsoa, Mahajanga and the CICM has been working in Madagascar to identify new solutions for the management of FGS since 2021. The project FIRM-UP (<https://web.facebook.com/FirmupMadagascar/?rdc=1&rdr>) financed by cor-ntd (<https://www.cor-ntd.org>) was the first of several projects implemented in Madagascar, a country where FGS is highly prevalent (Kutz et al, 2023).



A first assessment showed that despite the high prevalence, a low awareness of the disease within both the general population and the health care workers (Rausche et al 2023) exists there. This was further highlighted through three medical case reports (Marchese et al, 2023) in which we could show how women rarely approach the health system for silent diseases such as FGS and cervical cancer. In fact, public health strategies for FGS can potentially be combined with cervical cancer prevention, which is a high burden disease hardly treatable in resource limited settings.

The group’s work on FGS could not only provide health care to Malagasy women as well as producing crucial scientific knowledge about this neglected disease but also allowed for the progression of careers of young scientists both in Germany and Madagascar. The projects’ results were already presented at national and international conferences. Young Malagasy doctors had the chance to benefit of highly specialized medical training and to access small grants (<https://www.rstmh.org/grants/grant-awardees-2022>) aimed at boosting the career of young researchers.



Dr. Zoly (a Malagasy specialist) performing colposcopy during a training in Hamburg

The commitment of the group to FGS encompasses the whole philosophy of the group: Furthering science that helps populations suffering from forgotten diseases while strengthening local capacities to support decolonization in global health.

The results of said questions made it possible to estimate the prevalence of FGS and HPV, to understand the awareness of the disease in women and healthcare professionals, and to highlight real-life issues in the clinical management of suspected cases of FGS and precancerous lesions. This can provide a stable foundation for new research activities.

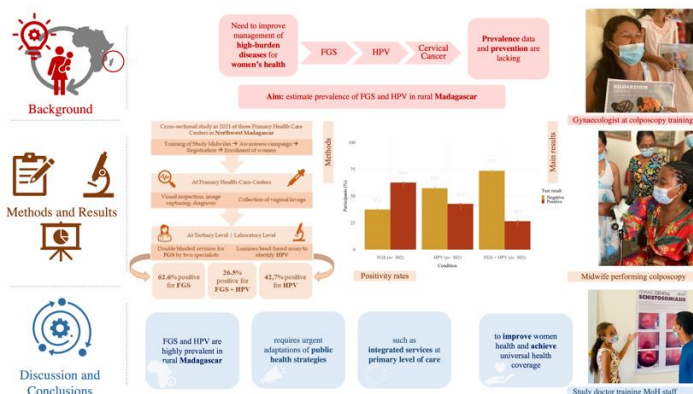
The follow-up of women previously assessed by colposcopy is currently underway, in a joint screening approach for FGS and HPV, which envisages developing joint awareness campaigns for the two diseases and preparing the country for the introduction of the

HPV vaccine (CHIMPS Project, funded by EKFS <https://www.ekfs.de/en/humanitarian-funding/currently-funded-projects/controlling-cervical-cancer-through-implementation-hpv>).

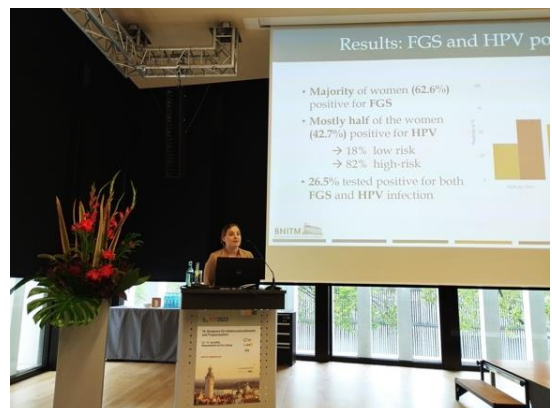
The group’s overall goal is to contribute to the improvement of women's health and gain evidences that will help the fight to end NTDs, particularly in this chronic, silent form which affects women, increasing health inequities they are already facing.

You can find all our publications on FGS under this link:

<https://www.bnitm.de/forschung/forschungsgruppen/population/abt-infektionsepidemiologie/laborgruppe-fusco/publications>



Graphical abstract, from Kutz JM et al.



Pia Rausche presenting FIRM UP results at the KIT