

The Lab Group Fusco engages for NTDs on the World NTD Day 2024

Neglected tropical diseases (NTDs) occur mainly in resource-limited regions of the Global South. They particularly affect the poorest part of the population, who do not have regular and secured access to adequate medical care, clean drinking water and sufficient nutrition. Currently 20 infectious diseases, caused by viruses, bacteria, fungi and parasites, as well as snakebite envenoming are classified as NTDs by the World Health Organization. The list of NTDs has lastly been enlarged in December 2023 with the bacterial infection Noma, showing the success of the advocacy of the NTD community for other neglected diseases to join the official list. Although progress is being made in the fight against NTDs, with 600 million fewer people in need of interventions by 2020 than in 2010, the current decline in research funding and the consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has put many NTD control programs on hold, are jeopardizing the progress made to date.

Communication is a key element in the fight against NTDs. In order to raise awareness within and outside of the research community, the Lab Group Fusco is involved in communication between science and the public through the annual NTD Day since 2021. This year, on the 30th of January, a collaborative event was organized together with the working group snakebite envenoming, under the leadership of Dr. Benno Kreuels and Dr. Jörg Blessmann, and the BNITM press office at the historic lecture hall of the BNITM.



Speakers of this year's NTD day at the BNITM.



Participants during the scientist talks at the BNITM lecture hall (above) Film screening and panel discussion at the Charite in Berlin (below)



After an introduction by the Chair of the Board of the BNITM, Prof. Dr. Jürgen May, six scientists at different career stages were able to give insights into their projects, conducted at the institute and abroad – five participated in person and one directly from the field in Malawi. Their interdisciplinary work ranged from lab-based research in Ghana on buruli ulcer and field work in Malawi for prevalence mapping of snakebites, to the implementation of diagnostics for chronic schistosomiasis into primary health care in Madagascar. Over 40 guests participated to animate the debate and subsequently further discussed with the scientists over coffee and cake.

On the occasion of the NTD Day, Pia Rausche was also able to visit a film screening organized by the Drugs for Neglected Diseases initiative (DNDi) and the Berlin student chapter of Universities Allied for Essential Medicines (UAEM), connecting and discussing with likeminded people. Following this great exchange, the German Networks for Neglected Tropical Diseases (DNTDs) organized a panel discussion at the Bundestag, combining the political side of Germany and the German NTD research community. After many engaging coffee talks and the great connections made in Berlin we are looking forward to next year's events on and around the World NTD day! But the engagement towards NTD elimination does not stop in between these events, so let's follow this year's NTD Day slogan all year around: **Unite. Act. Eliminate.**