

## Fusco Lab Group Makes Impression at European Conference for Tropical Medicine and International Health 2023

The Fusco lab group made a notable presence at this year's European Conference for Tropical Medicine and International Health (ECTMIH 2023) in Utrecht, Netherlands.

The welcoming session set the stage for the conference, which focused on shaping the future of equitable and sustainable planetary health in light of the human-induced climate crisis.

It was an excellent opportunity for the entire Fusco lab group to gather at the conference, alongside their Malagasy and international partners. The conference offered a unique opportunity to showcase the group's numerous projects, along with published and unpublished data from the past several years of intensive fieldwork on various projects such as FIRM-UP, CoBoGo, freeBILy, and RESAMP. Additionally, during several panel discussions, the group had the chance to emphasise their commitment to advancing the NTD roadmap's implementation, particularly regarding schistosomiasis, drawing attention to FGS.



Picture 1. Fusco lab group with Malagasy partners

In addition to the group's primary focus, all team members had the valuable opportunity to gain inspiration from a wide range of other topics and acquire knowledge that will advance their own projects, such as global mental health, decolonization, and empowerment in global health. These subjects are of great significance to the group's agenda.

On the second day, multi-faceted aspects of the major findings from the freeBILy trial, chaired by Daniela Fusco (BNITM) and Govert von Dam (Leiden University Medical Center), were presented. Daniela Fusco, Pytsje Hoekstra-Mevius (Leiden University Medical Center), Govert von Dam, Raphaël Rakotozandrindrainy (University of Antananarivo) and Josiane Honkpehedji (CERMEL) shared the preliminary findings from Madagascar and Gabon. The session concluded with an engaging discussion with the audience.

On the third day Irina Kislaya presented insights into the CoBoGo study about COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy and associated factors in the Boeny region of Madagascar.



Picture 2. Irina Kislaya talking about COVID-19 vaccine hesitancy

On the last day Valentina Marchese (BNITM) started off with an oral presentation on "Paving the way for the introduction of pediatric praziquantel in schistosomiasis endemic countries: a cross-sectional study from Madagascar" followed by the final session chaired by Daniela Fusco on how to optimize strategies to meet the NTD roadmap goals for schistosomiasis and Valentina Marchese's oral presentation about the "Ultrasound assessment of hepatosplenic schistosomiasis: an experience in a highly endemic area of Madagascar."



Picture 3. Strategies to reach NTD roadmap goals session chaired by Dr. Daniela Fusco

Throughout the conference scientific posters were presented and were all met by a curious audience: Dewi Ismajani Puradiredja (iTCB BNITM) presented results from the CoBoGo study "Optimizing vaccine uptake in sub-Saharan Africa: Lessons learnt from a collaborative COVID-19 vaccination campaign in Madagascar", Pia Rausche (BNITM) on "Knowledge of Female Genital Schistosomiasis in a highly endemic population: a cross-sectional study from Madagascar, Jana Hey (BNITM) on "The impact of chronic schistosomiasis on co-infections with dengue virus in

Madagascar”, Jean-Marc Kutz (BNITM) on “FGS and HPV prevalence and risk factors in rural Madagascar: Implications for women’s health services in limited resource settings”, and Aaron Remkes (BNITM) on some results from the RESAMP study, namely “Geographic distribution of schistosomiasis in rural Madagascar: a cross-sectional study”.

Overall, the ECTMIH2023 conference was a resounding success for the Fusco lab group. They had the opportunity to present their work to a broad audience, connect with other researchers, and learn from others in the field. The group is dedicated to continuing their efforts to improve the lives of those affected by schistosomiasis and other neglected tropical diseases. The Fusco lab group stands as a shining example of what can be accomplished through dedication, collaboration, and innovation. Their work at the ECTMIH2023 conference was a major success, paving the way for even greater accomplishments in the future.



**Picture 3. Dr. Valentina Marchese presenting on ultrasound assessment of hepatosplenic schistosomiasis**