

Tropical Medicine and Infectious Diseases

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The part of the earth between the tropic of cancer at a latitude of 23° 27' north and the tropic of capricorn at a latitude of 23° 27' south is called the tropics. The subtropical regions are located between the latitudes of 23° and 35° to the north and south of the equator. Classical tropical and naval medicine (today's travel medicine) comprises all diseases that mainly occur in the warm regions of the world because some pathogens prefer certain climatic circumstances and because of lower socioeconomic living conditions. Increasingly tropical diseases occur due to travel, migration, global warming but also autochthonously in industrialized countries.

The fact that the classical tropical diseases as well as tuberculosis, AIDS, Hepatitis C and other diseases not only occur in tropical and subtropical areas but also more commonly in developing than in industrialized countries led to the change of the name of the German Society for Tropical Medicine and International Health e.V.

Worldwide 41% of all deaths are caused by tropical and infectious diseases, compared with 20% caused by cardiac and 18% caused by malignant diseases. Among tropical and infectious diseases most deaths are caused by pneumonia, tuberculosis, diarrhoea, malaria, AIDS and Hepatitis B. Plagues do not have lost their deadly threat in developing countries. But also the industrialized world is regularly struck by plagues, epidemics and pandemics. These threats are mainly caused by travel, migration, hygienic deficits, climatic conditions and intensive livestock farming.

What do we have achieved so far? Smallpox are said to be wiped out - apart from a few tons of biological weapons in Russia - and Poliomyelitis is fought back from the Americas. On the other hand more than 20 new tropical and infectious diseases have been identified within the last 30 years, mainly in tropical countries. HIV, Lassa-, Ebola- and Marburg-viruses from Africa, new hepatitis viruses like hepatitis E from India, the new Cholera strain O 139 Bengal, that may lead to the 8. Cholera pandemic, Kuru in Papua New Guinea, cryptosporidia, microsporidia, babesia and Balamuthia mandrilaris were discovered or identified as human pathogens.

The significance of tropical and infectious diseases is also underlined by the fact that 22 of 92 (nearly a quarter) of all Nobel prizes in medicine in the last century were awarded for research in tropical and infectious diseases. But many universities in Germany and Austria have not kept up with research needs, and lectures on tropical and infectious diseases are rare at most German speaking universities.

For this reason post-doc education in the field of tropical and infectious diseases has great impact to make up for the deficits of medical school education and for rudimentary governmental support in the field of tropical and infectious diseases. This explains the tremendous significance of this „Course Catalogue“ giving thorough and detailed information of the international post-doc education offers.

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