

Axel Hoffmann, Dr. phil., Dipl.-Psych., Basel, Switzerland

Course Coordinator and lecturer at the Swiss Tropical Institute, Basel, Switzerland

tropEd – a Network for capacity building in International Health

To increase the quality of postgraduate training is one of the objectives of the „Master in International Health“. This program is offered by tropEd – a network of 24 European institutions of higher education with longstanding experiences in development cooperation.

The training in International Health focuses on strategies of a new public health approach, which takes into account the setting in countries with resources constraints („classical“ developing countries and countries in Eastern Europe and Central Asia). Furthermore this approach overcomes the limitations of the classical tropical medicine with its pure curative focus. International Health describes a transdisciplinary way of thinking and practice, which combines the knowledge and the experiences of different disciplines: epidemiology, social sciences, medicine, economy, management sciences, ethnology, biology, demography, etc. The aim is to show how a successful Primary Health Care service with a high coverage could be put in practice, on the basis of a critical analysis of the health status of the population, an evidence based resource allocation and an efficient project planning and intervention process.

Mobility of the students is fundamental in this study program: To get the Master certificate, students have to take courses in at least two different institutions in two different countries. More and more partner institutions in countries with resources constraints are partly involved in the training activities. The Swiss Tropical Institute for instance offers courses in rural Tanzania – not only curative ones, but also courses in management and program planning. Aim is to teach students not only knowledge, but also practical skills for a later mission in such countries.

The Master curriculum is designed for health workers from countries with

resources constraints, but also for European medical doctors, nurses, health scientists, biologists, psychologists, pharmacists, health planners and managers, etc., who are preparing themselves for a mission in such a country. In addition, more and more international organizations and NGOs express their need for qualified experts with a formal degree in International Health.

The MIH is a modular program and is equivalent to a one year full-time Master, but can be taken over a period of five years. A mandatory core course of about 3 months can be taken at the Swiss Tropical Institute in Basel, and at the Universities of Berlin, Bordeaux, Copenhagen, Brescia, Bergen and Edinburgh. The core course is followed by advanced optional modules (from 1 week to 5 weeks duration) with a total of about 14 weeks. The program is finalized with a research dissertation. Credits are transferred according to the European Transfer Credit System (ECTS).