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Manuel Hetzel new President of the Swiss Malaria Group

At their annual general meeting, the members of the Swiss Malaria Group elected Professor Manuel Hetzel as their new president. Hetzel is a research group leader at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) and professor of epidemiology at the University of Basel. In this capacity he is mainly concerned with malaria control measures. He succeeds Professor Christian Lengeler, who is stepping down after six years as president and a total of over sixteen years with the Swiss Malaria Group.



Manuel Hetzel (left) and Christian Lengeler (right)

The Swiss Malaria Group counts sixteen members representing institutions from academia, civil society, the state administration, as well as the private sector. The group aims to further strengthen Switzerland's commitment in the fight against malaria. At its annual general assembly, the members of the Swiss Malaria Group elected Professor Manuel Hetzel as its new president. Hetzel studied biology, medical parasitology and epidemiology in Basel and Brazil and obtained his PhD in epidemiology in Basel with a research thesis on access to malaria treatment in Tanzania. He then worked in various academic positions in Papua New Guinea, Australia and South Africa. He has now been employed at the Swiss Tropical and Public Health Institute (Swiss TPH) for ten years and holds the positions of research group leader and professor of epidemiology.

Manuel Hetzel is fascinated by the complex life cycle of malaria parasites as well as the ever-changing challenges in combating this still devastating infectious disease. Having lived for several years in malaria endemic areas and worked closely with malaria control programmes, he is convinced that it takes both sound scientific knowledge and innovation, as well as a lot of practical experience and partnership-based commitment on the ground to successfully combat malaria. He sees the Swiss Malaria Group in a central role to ensure the continuity of Switzerland's contribution to global malaria control.

"In the past, institutions based in Switzerland have consistently made significant contributions to the research and development of new malaria control measures, as well as to their funding and implementation in affected

countries," says Hetzel. "With the Swiss Malaria Group, which links these institutions in a network, we would like to further strengthen the Swiss commitment in a spirit of partnership and thus contribute to better health in the poorest regions of the world." According to Hetzel, an important role is also played by Swiss financial contributions to global institutions dedicated to the fight against malaria, first and foremost the Geneva-based "Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria." With the Swiss Malaria Group, he would therefore like to contribute to a greater awareness of the importance and effectiveness of the Swiss fight against malaria in order to secure broad support for this global commitment among the population and politicians.

Christian Lengeler: over 30 years in the fight against malaria

Christian Lengeler first encountered malaria as a young scientist when he worked in a hospital in Tanzania and saw children dying daily from the infectious disease - an experience that left a deep mark on him. Saving lives, whether through better diagnosis, access to medicines, or the provision of insecticide-treated bed nets, has been Lengeler's calling in life ever since. Great progress has been made in the fight against malaria since his time in Tanzania, saving more than 7 million lives by 2020. But Lengeler warns that the global goal of eliminating malaria by 2030 is still a long way off. He says: "The international community needs to address key challenges, including ensuring availability and access to effective treatment and mosquito control measures." As president of the Swiss Malaria Group from 2017 to 2023, he also carried this message repeatedly to decision-makers in Switzerland, noting that "Swiss commitment remains critical. Switzerland has a great legacy as the home of most major health organisations and a driver of innovation, and we must continue to commit our considerable resources to a malaria-free world."

Switzerland with a leading role in the fight against malaria

Switzerland has a long and extremely successful history in the fight against malaria. The country has important resources at its disposal to put an end to one of mankind's oldest and deadliest diseases. For example, the members of the Swiss Malaria Group have been conducting malaria research at the highest level for decades, developing and producing prevention and treatment options and supporting projects on the ground.

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About the Swiss Malaria Group

The Swiss Malaria Group brings together research institutions, public institutions, private industry and civil society to successfully fight malaria. The group's shared goal is to maintain and strengthen Switzerland's commitment to the fight against malaria.

More information available at: www.swissmalariagroup.ch

Member organisations: <https://www.swissmalariagroup.ch/en/about-us/members/>