

Participant Report ECTMIH 2019 in Liverpool

On my return flight to Bergen, I finally found time to think about my visit to the European Conference on Tropical Medicine and International Health 2019 (ECTMIH) in Liverpool: A large global health conference at a convention center that could easily host indoor sports events. I felt pretty small, physically and academically.

I was tightly holding my program-booklet, walking up and down the escalators from one auditorium to another. When you have to choose between twenty parallel sessions, the fear of missing out is big. However, the sessions I joined proved to be relevant for my research interests – and highly entertaining. The opening session set the tone for the conference discussing key challenges in the decade ahead. A discussion was sparked on the relevance of mental health within the global health agenda – a topic that the conference had largely ignored in the program. Yet, there was a wide agreement in the panel that mental health represented a neglected crisis in sub-Saharan Africa – at exponential cost if unaddressed. This was a timely confirmation as I am part of a new project to systematically survey child alcoholism in Uganda.

The next two sessions I picked were both held by two researchers who have influenced my academic thinking: Prof. Don Bundy from LSHTM is an authority on applied school health. He chaired a session with the aim to introduce the dimension of human capital gains when considering child and adolescent health interventions. I've gained a new view on the importance of the first 1000 days in life. Felicity Algate from the Behavior Insights Team introduced the UK's take on public nudging and incentivizing desirable behavior. I have often resorted to BIT's material when thinking about intervention design. It was useful to see the approach summarized - and to discuss aspects of 'shaming' with Felicity after the session.

In the afternoon I presented some work in progress of my PhD-project as an academic poster: predictive factors for parent's adherence to malaria prevention in their children in Malawi. I enjoyed hearing questions from other researchers, some comments made me see what we did – and how we presented it - in a different light. Seeing the research of other PhD Candidates and their different ways of presenting it was eye-opening. I left this session with many ideas how to further condense and “brush up” future research results.

I'm glad I received the support from the Norwegian Research School on Global Health to join this conference; it was rewarding to join and many conversations I had are still revolving in my head.

(The Photo shows my co-supervisor, Prof. Ingunn Engebretsen, Thandile Gondwe, a PhD Candidate at UiB and me.)

