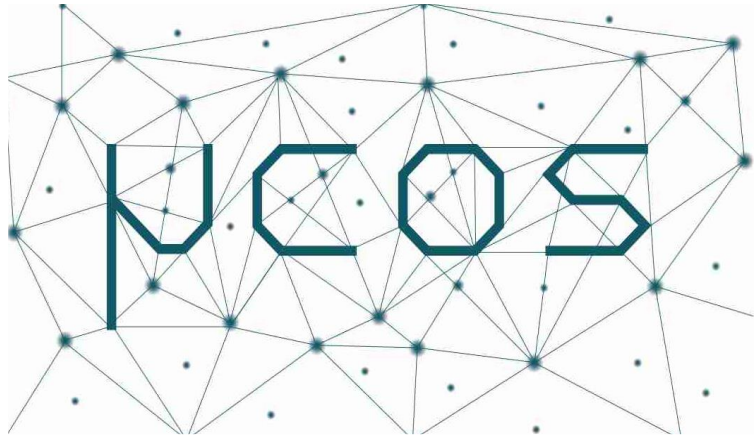


MYCOS Kicks Off: Igniting a New Era in the Fight against Antifungal Resistance

On September 30th, 2024, the MYCOS Consortium celebrated a landmark occasion with the official kickoff meeting at the Medical University of Innsbruck. This meet-and-greet event also served as an orientation session for the 11 newly inducted PhD students, the "11 knights" of the MYCOS team—who emerged triumphant after months of rigorous applications. The event marked the beginning of an ambitious journey toward tackling antifungal resistance, all from a pioneering One Health perspective.



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Leading experts in the field, Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. rer. nat. Michaela Lackner and Univ.-Prof. Dr. Timon Adolph from the Infection Immunity and Transplantation (IIT) PhD program, led the orientation session to kick off the event.

Their discussions emphasized how vital the students would be to the global effort to combat antifungal resistance. Following was a pleasant photo shoot to commemorate this significant occasion for the MYCOS family.



The MYCOS PhD Family: United in the Fight against Antifungal Resistance! Picture Courtesy: Copyright of David Bullock (MUI-PR)



Picture Courtesy: Copyright of David Bullock (MUI-PR)

Following a brief intermission, Ao.Univ.-Prof. Dr. Wolfgang Prodingler, MME, Executive Vice President for Teaching and Study Matters, led the official launch of the MYCOS program. Prof. Prodingler acknowledged the MYCOS faculty for their hard work in starting this ground-breaking project and congratulated the 11 PhD students on their outstanding

accomplishments. He also sent his best wishes to the faculty. He underlined how important this program is to the advancement of antifungal research worldwide.

During the inauguration, distinguished speakers from the Medical University of Innsbruck gave motivational speeches.

The director of the Institute of Hygiene and Medical Microbiology, Univ.-Prof. Dr. med. Cornelia Lass-Flörl, congratulated all those participating in the MYCOS project and expressed special gratitude to Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. rer. nat. Michaela Lackner for her crucial role in leading this endeavor.



Picture Courtesy: Copyright of David Bullock (MUI-PR)

The MYCOS consortium will focus on four main work packages: *the azole burden, the clinical impact of azole exposure, azole resistance, and alternative therapies*. The consortium is made up of 23 biomedical professionals, including 12 renowned principal investigators and 11 PhD students. These topics will be investigated as part of discrete side projects aimed at tackling the urgent problem of antifungal resistance.



Picture Courtesy: Copyright of David Bullock (MUI-PR)

Univ.-Prof. Mag. Dr. rer. nat. Sigrid Neuhauser, speaker of the BioApp PhD program, lauded MYCOS for creating synergies with existing PhD programs like IIT and BioApp. She emphasized how MYCOS is shaping the next generation of leaders in mycology and antifungal stewardship, strengthening collaboration among researchers in Innsbruck, and putting the city's

mycological research cluster on the global map.

The ceremony concluded with heartfelt remarks from Professor Michaela Lackner herself, who expressed gratitude to the Medical University of Innsbruck and the LFU for their support and funding of the MYCOS program. Her closing words encapsulated the spirit of the event: "This

is only the beginning of our collective journey to combat antifungal resistance. Together, we will make a global Impact."

The MYCOS Consortium kickoff marks the start of a groundbreaking chapter in the fight against antifungal resistance—a challenge that demands not only cutting-edge research but also collaboration and determination. Here's to the MYCOS consortium members, the future of mycological research!

As the ceremony finished with a short networking event, the PhD students presented their own reflections, adding a spark of energy and desire to an already exciting day. The following are the impressions about the MYCOS kick-off event from the upcoming forerunners of antifungal resistance:

"MYCOS is a unique opportunity to collaborate on a common goal with people from diverse backgrounds, all driven by goodwill and expertise, which was evident at the official kickoff meeting. What stood out to me there was the openness of all the principal investigators in warmly welcoming us and keeping hierarchies low to foster an unrestricted environment. I am excited about three years of intense research, personal growth, and great company!"

- Ulrich

"I went into the kick-off meeting knowing it will be a very helpful introduction to the program that we are all about to be/already are a part of, but I was pleasantly surprised with how informative it was, and how open and friendly the environment felt. The opportunity to meet and speak to all the people who are a part of MYCOS program in one place and hear experienced and talented individuals share their wisdom with us before we embark on this journey was invaluable. I found myself being very thankful that I was able to attend the meeting, long after it had ended."

- Nidhi

"The kick-off meeting for MYCOS offered a nice welcome and a clear overview of my future PhD journey. I also liked that we could connect to our fellow PhD students and supervisors

over delicious foods, drinks, and the amazing view of Innsbruck's mountains. I am excited about the next years and look forward to building friendships and collaborations."

- Katja

"The start of the MYCOS Programme was awesome! All the PhD students were super friendly and really motivated to get started on their projects. The energy in the room was great and it made me even more excited to dive in. You can really tell the Professors are passionate about the programme, but what stands out even more is how committed they are to guiding and supporting us. It's great to know we have a reliable group of experienced mentors who've got our backs. The overall atmosphere of the meeting was positive, and I'm excited to start collaborating with everyone and moving forward with our research!"

- Aldrien

"The kick-off meeting for the MYCOS project was a great start to the project. I went there hoping to meet some nice people but what I got was meeting a group of young, nice and enthusiastic people ready to start their research for the greater goal of MYCOS. The welcoming words and information we got from Michaela Lackner and Timon Adolph reminded us of what we all will be working towards in the next years and gave us the main information we needed to reach our goal. After the welcoming words of the directors and Sigrid Neuhauser we had the opportunity to get to know also the other PIs which we may not have met at all. This also gave us the opportunity to talk about some collaborations we can have in the future. Also talking to all the other starting PhDs was nice and I am sure that we are going to have a great time together and I am looking forward to the next years as a member of this great team and project!"

- Alina

"I was truly impressed by the emphasis on effective communication and collaboration within our community. The professionalism and teamwork displayed by everyone reinforced our shared commitment to the program's ultimate goal: better understanding and overcoming antifungal resistance. This meeting was just the beginning, and I'm excited to embark on this journey together—buckle up; you'll be hearing more from MYCOS!"

- Behrad

"I think the kick-off meeting was a great way to meet up with both fellow PhD-students and staff of the MYCOS program. The overview presented during this meeting gave clarity of what is expected of us PhD-students and what we could expect from the program. This clarity and the "gezellige" borrel afterwards made me feel welcome and part of the team. I have a lot of confidence that this program will be very fruitful for everybody involved. "

- Chendo

"With great excitement, I awaited the start of MYCOS, anticipating the opportunity to meet my future colleagues and begin the exciting journey ahead. The Tyrolean sun, together with the warm welcome of our PIs and senior officials of the Medical University, created a perfect start. After the official introduction, with delicious food and drinks providing the ideal backdrop for informal conversations and getting to know everyone. The combination of the stunning setting and the friendly ambiance made for a memorable and enjoyable start to this new chapter."

- Jakob

"The kick-off meeting was quite insightful, and I was glad to connect with fellow PhD colleagues working on MYCOS, as well as the dedicated PIs leading the program. It gave me a clearer understanding of the vision and mission of MYCOS and provided a great boost in terms of what is expected from me going forward."

- Olayinka

"The MYCOS kick-off meeting was a truly inspiring experience. The exchange of ideas among such a diverse group of experts, students, and PIs was energizing. I was especially impressed by the depth of discussion around our shared goals in fungal research and the potential for future collaborations. It felt empowering to be part of a project that is addressing critical challenges in medical mycology, and I look forward to contributing to the exciting work ahead."

- Pallavi

Acknowledgment

We would like to express our gratitude to *Pallavi Saxena* for her effort in drafting this newsletter. Her contributions have played a crucial role in compiling and presenting the information effectively.