

# Back in action for fieldwork: A HUGS update on schistosomiasis research and control in Malawi

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**In April 2021, a new 4-year investigation officially started exploring the importance of hybrid schistosomes in Malawi. This Wellcome Trust/NIHR funded study is entitled "HUGS: Hybridisation in urogenital schistosomiasis", a novel collaboration between LSTM and MLW.**

Following from a Joint Investigator Award from the Wellcome Trust/NIHR, several researchers in UK, Malawi and Australia are now working together to develop a Onehealth response to the concerning rise of hybrid schistosomes. The HUGS investigation is a multidisciplinary longitudinal population study seeking to reveal the transmission biology, epidemiological impact and clinical importance of *Schistosoma haematobium*-hybrids in Mangochi and Nsanje Districts. The HUGS team aims to unravel the complex and dynamic epidemiology of urogenital and intestinal schistosomiasis and, after COVID-19 travel restrictions were lifted, conducted a pilot study in October 2021, which provided material for the HUGS website and Twitter account.



The **HUGS** website is at [www.lstmed.ac.uk/hugs](http://www.lstmed.ac.uk/hugs)

Our website features our previous papers and current blogs.

## A recently published formative study on schistosomiasis in Lake Malawi



### Male Genital Schistosomiasis Along the Shoreline of Lake Malawi: Baseline Prevalence and Associated Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices Among Local Fishermen in Mangochi District, Malawi

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The **Table** highlights key symptoms of men with MGS and this study called for improved accessibility to MGS diagnostics and targeted PZQ treatments within control interventions. The **HUGS** study will assess **how MGS is perhaps altered by hybrid schistosome infection(s)**.

**TABLE** Proportion of all 378 participants who reported experiencing symptoms of schistosomiasis including MGS.

	Symptoms	n	Percent (%)
General	Fever	110	30.9
	Weakness	85	22.6
	Abdominal pain	130	34.5
Schistosomiasis	Dysuria	104	27.6
	Urinary frequency	94	24.9
	Urine color change	177	47.1
	Haematuria	74	19.6
	Blood in stool	27	7.3
MGS	Haemospermia	4	1.0
	Pain on coitus	18	4.8
	Pain on ejaculation	12	3.2
	Pain in genital organs	22	5.9

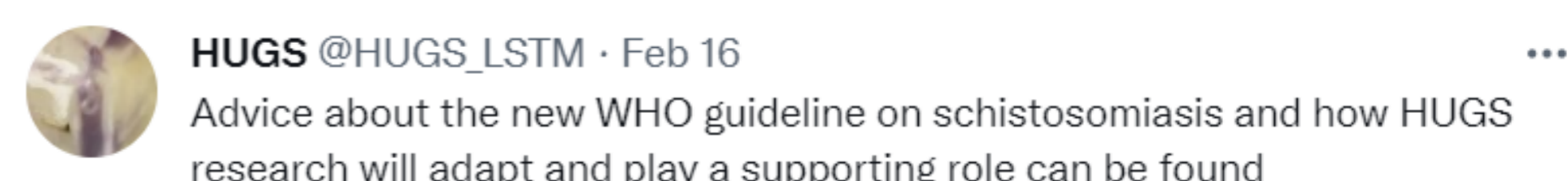
Core to **HUGS** communications and future research uptake strategy has been the creation of a twitter account. The **Twitter account promotes our research reports and blogs.**



Challenges experienced in the field were reported with initial findings highlighted. Collectively, **this helps to set our future research agenda in the field and in the laboratory.**



**HUGS** is mindful of the new **WHO 2022 Guideline for Control and Elimination of Schistosomiasis** and how we can each contribute to this 2030 NTD agenda.



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The 2022 WHO Schistosomiasis Guideline – New ...  
At the start of the webinar, we all remembered the achievements of Dr Mwele Malecela, with a ...