



Strengthening the capacity of Research Ethics Committees in Africa



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Acknowledgements and affiliations

Sponsor – EDCTP, Geneva

External Consultants – World Medical Association, USA, WHO, Dept of Ethics, Trade, Human Rights & Health Law

Host Institution – University of Ibadan, NIGERIA

Collaborating Institutions –

Nnamdi Azikiwe University Teaching Hospital, Ethics review Board (NAUTH – ERB), (South Eastern Zone, Nigeria)

Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital, Institutional Review Board (OAUTH – IRC), Ile-Ife (South West Zone, Nigeria)

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Observers: i. Nigerian Bioethics Initiatives ii. Oyo State Ministry of Health Ethics Review Board



Objectives



- Strengthen the capacity of Research Ethics Committee to provide oversight for health research in three institutions in Nigeria.
- Evaluate the outcome of interventions on the Committees capacity to perform research oversight function.



Methods (1)



- A set of needs assessment criteria was used for the selection of three collaborating Institutions based on acute need for both human resource and facilities (Ref. NEBRA).
- Needs assessment of selected Institutions were specifically conducted using Focus Group Discussion with Ethics Review Committees of three selected Institutions.
- A four-day Training of Trainers(TOT) Workshop was conducted at the University of Ibadan (Host) to improve knowledge in ethics of research and ethics review process.
- Resources comprising of Photocopier, Computer set, Printer, Scanner were delivered to each site to improve functional activities of the Committees.



Methods (2)



- Monitoring of Collaborating Ethics Review Committees by communication & visits by the Research team for a whole year.
- A one-day step down mini workshop was conducted at each site by trainers for staff in each participating institution and other surrounding local tertiary institutions were invited.
- Reports from all sites were coordinated and submitted to EDCTP for evaluation and circulation.



Results (1)



- TOT workshop was attended by 50 professionals who are Review Committee Members & researchers and trained in the current state of knowledge on Ethics of Research.
- TOT Workshop educated Review Committee members, the researchers, Administrators, the National Press & the Research communities in Nigeria on the importance of ethics of research.
- After initial training, trainers from the 3 participating Institutions conducted training programmes attended by 416 professionals drawn from 20 Institutions.
- As project outcome, the TOT workshop gave an added recognition to the status and functions of the Ethics Review Committees in Nigeria- thus informing a greater commitment to the management of the collaborating institutions.



Results (2)



- Each collaborating Institution provided counterpart funding to their Review Committee to match the initial grant by EDCTP.
- Equipment donated to each site by EDCTP served as empowerment tools for the implementation of the new knowledge and skills acquired from the TOT workshop.
- Monitoring for a period of 1 year encouraged active pursuit of project goals and influenced Ethics research collaboration between the 3 ethics review committees and the host institution.
 - Monitoring also exposed and stimulated committees to access external training courses for their personal and institutional improvement in ethics of research.
 - The step down TOT mini seminars elucidated the progress made by the ethics committees and demonstrated the effectiveness of the EDCTP project on the Nigerian Ethics Research Programme.



Discussion & Conclusions (1)



- This is a unique project as it effectively practicalised and actualised the TOT process. It has taught both theoretical aspect of Ethics as most workshops and has also demonstrated a hands-on process with direct facility provision to empower the committees.
- The Project appraisal was well documented in a workshop proceedings (ISBN 978 978 083 544 6) which was very widely circulated to Teaching Hospitals, Tertiary Institutions, Research Institutes, Professional Associations, NGOs and Govt. agencies throughout Nigeria.



Discussion & Conclusions (2)



- The Training was also well publicised in the International, National & Local Press thus effectively educating the community on the purpose and outcome of the project.
- The project had a multiplier effect in that initial trainees from TOT workshop in Ibadan replicated the training programs in their respective localities.
- The project has contributed meaningfully to Research Ethics by strengthening both the manpower capacity and providing the most basic and essential facilities to the selected sites. The project served as a TOT model whose effectiveness will be long lasting in those sites and their environs.



Future perspectives



- It is expected that the demonstrated effect of this study will last for a long time at the selected sites and their environs.
- Monitoring funds (Euro 2,000/per site) should be provided for about 5 years to nurture these collaborating sites to full maturity.
- Other funding agencies should be encouraged to follow this model. This is to avoid theoretical training which fade away in a very short while when there are no funds to practicalise the training received at the workshops.
- EDCTP organization should be encouraged to use this unique model to establish & strengthen Ethics Review Committees and thus establish a lasting Capacity development in Health Research Ethics in different countries in Africa.