



Capacities and capabilities of Research Ethics Committees (RECs) in Africa

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Introduction



- Research Ethics Committees (RECs) are independent review groups charged with protecting human participants welfare and rights while participating in research
- Effective and efficient operation of RECs depends highly on adequate resources availability:
 - trained human resources
 - financial resources
- This presentation focuses on existing practices of financing RECs in sub-Saharan Africa



Objectives



- To describe financing of RECs activities
- To report on the situation on human resource of RECs
- To propose options for improvement



Methods



- An electronic information collection from 15 RECs in sub-Saharan Africa on:
 - financing their activities
 - human resource availability
- We also undertook reviews of publications on the subject matter
 - web searches
 - Kirigia J et al (2005)
 - Kass N et al (2007)



E D C T P

Results (1)



~~Financing~~ RECs

- Little financial support is given to the functioning of RECs
- The financing comes mostly from host institutions (Public/private)who provide:
 - human resource (salaries),
 - office space and furniture
 - office supplies, utilities,
 - committee activities (meetings, training of members, oversight visits, and communication)
- For example
 - Tanzania , NIMR provides such support to the National REC
 - KEMRI, in Kenya, Malawi, Zimbabwe



Results (2)



- Grants won to strengthen the RECs system:
 - Tanzanian National REC, NIMR a grant from AMANET 2008-2010
 - Ugandan UNCST an EDCTP grant 2008-2010
 - Tanzanian TANHER Forum an EDCTP grant 2008-2009
- Review fees to offset costs
 - Tanzania, Malawi, Rwanda and South Africa,
 - The fee depends on the type of research, a clinical trial is charged more
 - Foreign researches charged differently from local researchers
 - Students not charged or charged lowest
- Some have no operational budgets and therefore incapable to operate
 - A recent WHO AFRO report (in Kass N *et al*, 2007) reported that that 36 percent of its member countries did not have RECs.



Results (3)



Human Resource

- In SSA, RECs are characterized by limited personnel with a formal research ethics training
- Formal training offered in the region:
 - Fogarty African Bioethics at JHSPH USA,
 - SARETI at University of Pretoria, SA
 - IRENSA at the University of Cape Town, RSA.
- Some REC members have also received short training on research ethics through seminars and workshops.
 - For example in 2007 to 2009 AMANET Organized 8 health research ethics training workshops for RECs and IRBs in Africa
 - About 21 African RECs participated with 2 or more of its members trained.
 - Tanzanian REC trained 7 of its members



Discussion & Conclusions



- IRB and REC activities in Africa are both limited by human and financial resource capacities
- Inadequate funding of RECs is orchestrated by poverty and threatens the independence of IRBs/RECs processes
- Adequate funding and trained human resource would improve the SSA RECs system capability to operate, and conduct reviews independently



Future perspectives



- Sustainable options for improving the current status of RECs in Africa:
 - Government's must be aware of the importance of RECs and therefore make provisions to finance them through operational budgets, in order to have capable RECs
 - Need to empower the RECs through training of personnel, and Members in Research ethics to instil independence and objective reviews and therefore the RECs capability
 - Encourage African RECs to utilize funding opportunities from organizations such as EDCTP to support African RECs through grant calls



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