

THE AFRICAN PERSPECTIVE ON GLOBAL RESEARCH ETHICS

**RESEARCH ETHICS
CONFERENCE**

Moshi, 18 April 2005

***Dr. F.W. Masha
Director, Research & consultancies,
KCM College
Moshi, Tanzania***

1. HISTORICAL NOTE

- Guidelines for conducting research on humans started with Nuremberg code (1946)
- Code reinterpreted and modified by Declaration of Helsinki (1964)
- Several violations of research ethics reported before and after the code in developed countries but not in Africa

2. RESEARCH IN AFRICA

- Research involving human subjects conducted in Africa mainly during and after colonial rule
- Most research involved few researchers within one or two institutions
- Research proposal review and monitoring mechanisms were hardly in place

3. Collaborative/Consortium Research

- This has been in place during past few decades.
- Involve several partner institutions and funding agencies which may include drug manufacturing companies
- Room for violation of research ethics wide.

4. Consider Belmont Principles (1978)

- Respect for persons (Autonomy)
- Beneficence
- Justice

5. AUTONOMY

- Sets rules for “Informed Consent”
- Elements:
 - Mental capacity
 - ability to understand
 - Voluntariness: freedom to participate/withdraw
 - freedom from influence/control

6. Factors contributing to non-compliance to “Autonomy)”

- Language
- Social practices and culture
- Incentives/inducement/Compensation
- Family/Community influence
- Protection of persons with diminished autonomy minimal
- Respect for study participants and community – usually lacking

7. Beneficence

= Minimize harm, maximize benefits

- Invasive procedures common
- Potential benefits or risks not known or disclosed
- Risks assumed by individuals/community
- Benefits to society at large

8. JUSTICE

= Treat people fairly

- Unfair selection of subjects
- Outcome of some research not beneficial to participating communities who assume the risks
- Multilateral research has room for exploitation of study community due to:
 - Poverty
 - Limited health care services
 - Limited understanding
 - Cultural and traditional practices
 - Poor regulatory infrastructure

9. WAY FORWARD

- Research Ethics Committees to observe national and global guidelines
- Need for collaborative partnership as outlined by Emanuel *etal* (Perspective, 2004)
 - Agreements
 - Mutual respect
 - Incorporation of results into clinical practice/intervention programs
 - Information dissemination
 - Fair distribution of research rewards