



## The Research Ethics Training Project: Developing, Implementing and Evaluating a Training Module on Ethics in Public Health Research

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Public health research is carried out in increasingly complex and challenging environments with researchers and research institutions from both developed and developing countries. Although research aims essentially at assessing and improving the health condition of populations, it can also carry potential harmful effects for the individual and the communities, especially when participants are the most vulnerable, such as those affected by diseases, poor, illiterate and lacking access to health care.

In order to protect research participants from such harms, several international ethics guidelines and declarations have been developed and are available. The most often used mechanism for ensuring adherence to ethical guidelines is through the establishment of ethics review committees in most research institutions at the local, regional and national levels with the task of providing ethical approval and oversight to research projects and ensuring the protection and rights of each participants.

Thus, the need to strengthen capacity of researchers and research ethics review committees in developing countries has led to a strong increase in the number and type of initiatives to build capacity in research ethics during the past five years. In addition to new websites, list serves, workshops and diplomas, several training or master courses and research ethics fellowships have emerged, mostly with a top-down approach often lacking the integration of international ethical perspectives. Consequently, there is thus an urgent need to develop capacity building approaches that take into account local contexts and realities, can target a wide audience and are cost effective and sustainable.

Objectives: the general objective of the project is to develop and evaluate training materials in the area of research ethics that can be adapted for distance learning using an internet based approach. Specifically, a case book on research ethics will be produced and serve as a basis for the development of a WHO e-learning training course in research ethics. The case book will be a compilation of case studies in various regions of the world, which will have been tested and evaluated through workshops conducted by partners in different countries. Based on the case studies, a modular internet-based training tool will be developed. At the same time, a Communities of Practice (CoP) will be established using available databases and list-serves. The internet-based training tool will be evaluated by piloting it through the established CoP, and a final version produced.

Expected results include a case book of research ethics published and disseminated widely; an interactive internet-based research ethics training tool publicly available; and a network of researchers that functions as a Community of Practice.

Collaboration: The project takes place between the World Health Organisation and the University of Geneva Medical School with the collaboration of Harvard School of Public Health, University of Southern California Law School and the Graduate Institute of International Studies in Geneva.

### Project Team

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