

# BIOETHICS EXCHANGE

A NEWSLETTER FOR THE JOHNS HOPKINS-FOGARTY AFRICAN BIOETHICS TRAINING PROGRAM

VOLUME 1, ISSUE 7  
SEPTEMBER 2006

## FROM THE CO-DIRECTOR

Dear Colleagues,

Greetings! This is the time of the year where we miss our current 2006 trainees who are now back home, and plan for the next round of new trainees for 2007. The next few months are going to be busy preparing for our next reunion meeting in April 2007 – back here in Baltimore! It is our distinct pleasure to host all trainees at Johns Hopkins University (JHU) for a few days of intensive meetings, workshops, and of course fun! We hope this will serve to not only bring our “family” together, but also to build on our existing and planned initiatives, and strengthen future collaboration between all of us.

This newsletter describes some of the initiatives taken by our trainees – such as collaboration between Nigeria and Ghana. It is critical that such African exchanges occur more often and build to develop a strong network of ethics professionals throughout the continent. It is a pleasure to see our program contribute to that vision. It is also imperative that research studies and research outputs continue to increase in both quantity and quality. African must gain a stronger foothold in the international scientific literature and we hope that our reunion will contribute to further developing our papers and proposals ideas into concrete outputs.

We look forward to seeing you next year!

**Adnan A. Hyder, MD MPH PhD**  
Co-Director, Johns Hopkins-Fogarty International African Bioethics Training Program  
Department of International Health, and Berman Bioethics Institute  
Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health

## REPORTS FROM THE FIELD

### African Collaboration



*From June 9th to 17th, 2006, 2003 trainee Ademola Ajowon of Nigeria visited 2002 trainee Paulina Tindana.*

The objectives of the visit were to observe research ethics activities going on in the NHRC, to discuss issues related to capacity strengthening, and to complete writing a manuscript based on work completed in 2004 as part of the practicum of the Johns Hopkins University-Fogarty African Research Ethics Training Program. My host was Ms. Paulina Tindana, a 2002 trainee of the same program and of the Joint Centre for Bioethics, University of Toronto. She is also a research officer of the NHRC, a member of the NHRC Institutional Review Board (NHRCIRB), and is currently involved in a number of research ethics projects.

The Navrongo Health Research Centre is a renowned centers of excellence in biomedical and social science studies, and its work has been published widely in peer-reviewed journals. Situated in the northeastern part of the Ghana, with a population of 150,000 and sharing a border with Burkina Faso, Navrongo is approximately 14 hours travel by road from the capital, Accra. Although there are internal flights to Tamale, a two-hour road trip from Navrongo, traveling by road affords a visitor the rare opportunity of seeing Ghanaians in their true colors, observing the different parts of the country, and benefiting from their hospitality. I chose to visit NHRC because of its long-standing reputation for conducting community-based interventions that have positively impacted the lives

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### Collaboration, continued

of citizens in this area. To ensure that my visit was productive, the NHRC provided office space and access to a computer and internet, which enabled me to accomplish my tasks efficiently.

I accomplished three major activities during the visit. First, I completed the manuscript of a Fogarty- and Wellcome-funded research project on capacity development in research ethics for scientists and clinicians at the College of Medicine, University of Ibadan. Paulina provided useful comments on the manuscript and suggested appropriate journals for its publication.

Secondly, Paulina and I discussed common areas of interest for possible collaboration such as reproductive health research, empirical research on research ethics, and capacity strengthening of IRBs in both Ghana and Nigeria. We also discussed how Hopkins Fogarty trainees could take their participation in the research ethics realm to higher levels. We concluded that one of the ways of doing this effectively would be to widely disseminate the findings from their practicum through publication in reputable journals. This came out of a concern that most of the existing publications on research ethics for developing countries come from scholars in developed nations with little contribution from Africans. We also felt that since trainees worked very hard in developing and implementing their practica they should put in extra efforts to publish the findings. We acknowledged, however, the challenges involved in publishing in a peer-review journals including being overwhelmed with daily routine of work and a limited capacity to write a scientific paper. Yet, publishing in learned journals can bring acceleration of career advancement for fellows and greater visibility for the program. We suggested the possibility of converting the annual reunion meetings into a writing sabbatical. Our recommendation is that fellows should submit the initial drafts of their

manuscripts to the group for comments and suggestions and bring revisions to the meetings where colleagues and Hopkins faculty can provide additional comments. We hope this will develop the capacity of fellows in the long-run.

Finally, Paulina and I also shared experiences of running IRBs in our various institutions and suggested ways of addressing some of the challenges faced by IRBs in our countries and the need for a network of IRBs in the Sub-region.

I took away two important lessons from this visit. First, it is possible for scientists working in developing countries to network with each other with many positive outcomes. Instead of traveling to western European countries, African scientists should first think of where they can visit within the continent to share research ideas with fellow Africans. This will strengthen the call for south-to-south collaboration. Secondly, although Navrongo is rural, it is an ideal setting to conduct good quality research. There are many professional colleagues with whom one can bounce ethics research ideas, the environment is quiet and peaceful, there is reliable communication network, stable infrastructure including electricity, and most importantly friendly people.

I recommend that other trainees consider similar visits to trainees within their region or sub-regions as this strengthens collaboration and networking and will give force to our cause. Information on opportunities for travel fellowship can be accessed from [www.wellcome.ac.uk](http://www.wellcome.ac.uk).

I am grateful to the Wellcome Trust of England for making this trip possible; my institution, the University of Ibadan for facilitating this trip; and to the Director, Paulina, and other staff of the NHRC for hosting me and making my stay in Navrongo memorable.

*Ademola Ajuwon, 2003 JHU-Fogarty African Bioethics Training Program*

### Important Dates, Announcements, and 2006 Practicum Titles

#### 2006 Trainees' Practicum Titles:

**Robert Ssekubugu:** Exploring the experiences of study implementers in Uganda: A focus on ethical issues

**Caroline Kithinji:** The assessment of readability in Kenyan informed consent forms (ICFs) of biomedical research protocols involving humans: A retrospective cohort study

**Francis Masiye:** How urban subjects decide to participate in malaria clinical studies in urban and rural Malawi

#### Conferences

**11-13 October, 2006.** African Health Research Ethics Symposium, Meridien Hotel in Dakar, Senegal, the South African Research Ethics Training Initiative. For further information contact Ms Debbie Marais: [maraisd@ukzn.ac.za](mailto:maraisd@ukzn.ac.za)

**20-22 October, 2006.** Ancillary Care Obligations of Medical Researchers Working in Developing Countries. Held at the Kennedy Institute of Ethics, Georgetown University. <http://philosophy.georgetown.edu/ancillarycare.htm>.

**15-18 November, 2006** PRIM&R Annual HRPP Conference in Washington DC. More info: [www.primr.org](http://www.primr.org).

#### **Farewell from Nick**

"After eleven months with the training program, I will be departing for a position as a research assistant in a genetics lab at Amherst College. I have learned quite a bit about not only bioethics and Baltimore but also about the world of research, public health, and the interaction of government and academia. Introductory exposure such as I have had can only

leave one with more questions than one started out with; however, I feel that I can say for certain that the work of this program and its talented, dedicated trainees is noble and important work indeed. Thank you for letting me be a part of it.”

-Nick Juul

**April 15 –20, 2007** The third JHU-Fogarty African Bioethics Training Program Reunion will be held in Baltimore and will coincide with the Berman Bioethics Institute’s Tenth Anniversary Celebration.

#### New Affiliated Faculty Member

We are pleased to announce that **Dr. Maria Merritt** has joined the affiliated faculty of the Johns Hopkins-Fogarty African Bioethics Training Program. As of July 1, 2006, Dr. Merritt joined the full time faculty of both the Department of International Health in the Johns Hopkins Bloomberg School of Public Health and the Berman Bioethics Institute. Dr. Merritt earned her doctorate in philosophy at the University of California, Berkeley. Prior to

coming to Johns Hopkins, she has served as assistant professor in the philosophy department at the College of William and Mary in Virginia, as a Faculty Fellow at the Edmond J. Safra Foundation Center for Ethics at Harvard, and a Post-doctoral Fellow in the Department of Clinical Bioethics at the National Institutes of Health. Dr. Merritt brings strong interests in global health ethics and global research ethics. Most recently, Dr. Merritt published an article (with Christine Grady) in *AIDS* on “Reciprocity and post-trial access for participants in antiretroviral therapy trials”. In this article, she examines whether research participants are due antiretroviral therapy after participating in an HIV-related trial any more than other members of the local community are “due” such therapy. She concludes that participation alone does not entitle former participants to earlier or privileged access to scarce therapy. If limited amounts of HIV-related treatment are available in a poor country, then countries should make explicit rationing decisions about which groups (e.g., health care workers, mothers with dependent children, etc.) should have priority. While research participants contributing their time and effort is a compelling argument for providing HIV therapy as a reciprocal benefit, this could inappropriately shortchange their compatriots’ access to needed care.

### Bioethics Workshop in The Sudan

Bioethics is still in an early stage of development in Sudan, and the country has few academics or experts in the field. My colleagues at Alzaiem Alazhari University and I therefore planned and conducted a five-day training workshop on research ethics for researchers from universities, medical and health-related research institutions, and researchers from Ministry of Health.

The workshop was held at the Educational Development Center of the Faculty of Medicine, University of Khartoum, from the 22<sup>nd</sup> to the 26<sup>th</sup> of July, 2006. It was conducted in collaboration with Alzaiem Alazhari University, The Institute of Endemic Diseases, and The Federal Ministry of Health, and it was funded by a grant from The Wellcome Trust of the United Kingdom.

Announcement for the workshop was made in a daily Newspaper (Alayam), in the FMOH website ([www.fmoh.gov.sd](http://www.fmoh.gov.sd)), and wall posters were distributed to all universities, the Ministry of Health, and hospitals. Letters of invitation were written and sent to Deans of faculty and Directors General of a numerous institutions. Acceptance to the workshop was determined by level of engagement in health research involving human subjects. Applicants must have conducted or participated in at least two research studies involving human subjects in the last five years. Thirty-one senior researchers from different universities, research institutions, teaching hospitals, and departments of Federal and Khartoum State Ministries of Health participated in the

workshop.

The workshop covered topics ranging from the basic theories and principles of bioethics up to responsibility of researchers and the publication of findings. The material was provided in the form of lectures, group work, and problem solving (case study). Participants received the workshop’s material in hard copies (handouts) and softcopies (CD).

After a full five days of discussion, the participants of the workshop put forward the following recommendations:

- Establish a national body to govern medical and health research.
- Enhance the existing ethics review process in the country.
- Establish institutional ethics review committees in the academia and research institutions.
- Incorporate ethics in the curricula of medical, pharmaceutical and health related schools, in both undergraduate and postgraduate.
- Creating informal ethics forum and publication.
- Continuous in-service training in research and medical ethics.
- Amend the Public Health Legislations to include research and medical ethics.

*Dya Eldin Elsayed, 2004 JHU-Fogarty African Bioethics Training Program*

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THE JOHNS HOPKINS UNIVERSITY-FOGARTY AFRICAN BIOETHICS TRAINING PROGRAM

## Trainees

### 2001

Duncan Ngare, PhD, MPH  
Godwin Ndossi, Ph.D.  
Paul Ndebele, PhD (candidate),  
MSc

### 2003

Ademola Ajuwan, PhD  
Bavon Mupenda, MA  
Nicola Barsdorf, MHS

### 2005

Fraction Dzinjalama, PhD,  
MSc  
Gorrette Nalwadda, MSc  
Joseline Bruce, BSc

### 2002

Godfrey Tangwa, PhD, MA  
John Appiah, STM, STB  
Paulina Tindana, MHSc

### 2004

Dya Elsayed, MD  
Bornwell Sikateyo, MSc  
Mantoa Mokhachane, MBBCh

### 2006

Robert Ssekubugu  
Caroline Kithinji, MSc  
Francis Masiye, MPhil.

Your comments about the current issue, and ideas for the next issue are what will keep the Bioethics Exchange an interesting and lively newsletter!!

Please send contributions and suggestions to [nkass@jhsp.edu](mailto:nkass@jhsp.edu)

## Executive Committee

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Jack Bryant, MD, MPH  
Wen Kilama, PhD

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Holly Taylor, PhD, MPH  
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