

AMSA Global Health Research Ethics Pre-Departure Workshop Student Handout

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Introduction, Cases and Discussions adapted from Provenzano AM, Graber LK, Elansary M, Khoshnood K, Rastegar A, Barry M. Short-term global health research projects by US medical students: Ethical challenges for partnerships. *The American Journal of Tropical Medicine and Hygiene* 2010;83:211-4

Objectives:

1. To think about the potential ethical dilemmas that may arise in short-term global health research, based on experiences of prior students.
2. To discuss means of mitigating these dilemmas and means of seeking support when doing research internationally.

Workshop Content (Approximately 90 Minutes):

I. Introduction (10 minutes)

II. Group case discussion (10 minutes)

Research Priorities: Who decides?

Chris is a medical student applying for an international research grant. He wants to study HIV. Chris's advisor approves his proposal and put him in touch with his colleague Dr. K who runs a clinic in Vietnam. Dr. K tells Chris that patients have become wary of Westerners studying HIV, and some have complained that only HIV-positive patients benefit from research. Dr. K suggests that Chris develop a project focused on heart disease, which is an increasing concern in the community. Chris is reluctant to start over on his research proposal and feels that his HIV project is the more desirable for his own professional development.

III. Small group break out sessions (20 minutes)

a. Burdens of the host

Qing received an international research fellowship from her medical school. The Liberian physician sponsoring her spent hours assisting with the paperwork for her visa, arranging accommodations for her, and hiring a car to pick Qing up from the airport. Qing faces a series of logistic problems in setting up the study, and it takes longer than anticipated to get her research underway. Qing's sponsor spends one to two hours per day away from patient care helping her mitigate these difficulties, which disrupts the clinic and causes irritation among the clinic staff.

b. Informed Consent

Amit, a fourth-year medical student, travels to Peru to work on a research project. He and his advisor hire several Peruvian research assistants from the community to perform interviews. After the project is underway, Amit realizes that the assistants often paraphrase the questions and sometimes gloss over the informed consent form. When Amit asks one of the research assistants about it, he shrugs and says, "I am sure they understand ok." Amit is unsure what to say to his Peruvian supervisor or his advisor back in the United States. He decides not to say anything, because his Peruvian advisor is heavily burdened with clinical duties and his advisor from the United States is counting on this data for a publication.

c. Clinical Care versus Research Priorities

Andrew, a first year medical student from the U.S, is doing a summer research project on latent tuberculosis infection among HIV positive prisoners in Singapore. His faculty advisor at his medical school has been working with colleagues in Singapore and facilitated this research project.

Dr. H, a local physician, accompanies him to his study site for one week to help set up the study. During the first week, the prisoners share their other health concerns with Dr. H who treats them with the prison's limited medical supplies. After Dr. H. leaves, the prisoners expect that the research team will be able to continue treating their health problems, not only latent TB. Andrew is faced with having to tell the prisoners that he is not properly trained to give medical care. Andrew later realizes that many of the prisoners are identified with latent TB and he is concerned about the other prisoners who he is not screening. He also learns that there are not enough medications to treat the prisoners after his study ends, nonetheless the prisoners who are not screened in his study. Andrew is overwhelmed and frustrated that he cannot provide more help to the prisoners.

- IV. Concerns, conflicts and advice (15 minutes)
- V. Ethical dilemmas anticipated in your projects (20 minutes)
- VI. Future Steps (2 minutes)
- VII. Evaluation (5 minutes)