



Centre for Biomedical Ethics
Yong Loo Lin School of Medicine



Satellite meeting on the ethics of research with refugee and migrant populations

Venue: Pullman Bangkok King Power Hotel

Dates: 30 November & 1 December 2017

Meeting Rationale

The protection of refugee and migrant health requires evidence-informed national, regional and global migration health policies and practices. The ethical imperative for conducting this research in these populations is clear, given the scale of migration across the globe and the associated health risks faced by migrants and refugees.

In the context of growing recognition of the importance of health research that is sensitive to the needs of migrant and refugee populations, there is a need to consider the ethics of, and ethical approaches to, conducting research with migrant and refugee populations. There are significant ethical challenges given the diverse forms of vulnerability that may be experienced by refugee and migrant populations (issues of stigma and discrimination, safety, access to services, exclusion and compromised relationships with authority), and cultural and language barriers. While the ethical concerns may be similar across typologies of research and migration groups, they may be experienced in very different ways, which points to the need for exploration of different strategies. Standard ethics guidance and approval processes may not be optimised for research involving migrant and refugee populations or may unjustly exclude participation (for example of unaccompanied minors who may not be considered competent to provide consent).

There is an urgent need for policymakers, researchers, ethics review committee members and other stakeholders to meet and compare experiences of ethical challenges in research implementation in this context and to consider how best to address these. With the majority of globally displaced people being hosted in LMICs, it is relevant that this meeting is being organised by the Global Forum on Bioethics in Research, in collaboration with the National University of Singapore and the Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit (MORU), Thailand. The GFBR exists to provide a global platform for the exchange and sharing of experience and expertise on research ethics with a focus on LMIC settings and real life case studies.

Meeting Objectives

The aim of this meeting is to identify and discuss the ethics of, and ethical approaches to, conducting research with migrant and refugee populations. By identifying what is needed to advance ethical research in this field, the meeting aims to stimulate a research agenda to improve research practice and health outcomes for migrant and refugee populations.

The meeting will address the following questions:

- 1) What are the main ethical challenges for research with the various migrant subpopulations (e.g., refugee, asylum-seeking, labour migrant, minors) who are particularly vulnerable, marginalised or at risk of harm? Is the way research is done fit for purpose and “ethical” with these populations (e.g. the design of research). What is it that makes research with these populations different?
- 2) What is needed to improve research ethics in these populations and how best can the need be addressed (including the development of appropriate and targeted ethical guidance)?
- 3) How can we rethink some of the current processes related to research ethics (e.g. IRB review, training of field workers and community participation) to ensure that research with mobile populations is carried out in an ethical manner and promotes rigorous research and robust findings?

30 November 2017

08:45	Welcome and introduction: Phaik Yeong Cheah (MORU) and Katherine Littler (Wellcome) on behalf of the Planning Committee
09:00	Keynote presentation - Kolitha Wickramage (Global Migration Health Research and Epidemiology Coordinator, International Organisation for Migration (IOM), Philippines)
Session 1	Questions relating to the ethics of research with labour migrants and trafficked persons
09:30 10	Introduction to the theme: Chair – Mike Parker (Oxford University, UK)
15	Case study 1: Overview of the ethics in trafficking research: Study on Trafficking, Exploitation & Abuse in the Mekong (STEAM) - Nicola Pocock (United Nations University, Malaysia)
15	Case study 2: Ethics of qualitative research: Labour Exploitation, Trafficking and Migrant Health: Multi-country Findings on the Health Risks and Consequences of Migrant and Trafficked Workers – Vanessa Vaca (IOM South America, Argentina)
20	General Discussion
30	Breakout group discussion
11:00	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>

Session 2	Questions relating to the ethics of research with refugees and undocumented migrants
11:30 10	Introduction to the theme: Chair - Anne Harmer (Research for Health in Humanitarian Crises Programme, UK) and Dónal P. O'Mathúna (Dublin City University, Ireland)
15	Case study 3: Beyond do no harm – A journey towards ethical research practice with refugee women and communities - Linda Bartolomei (University of New South Wales, Australia)
15	Case study 4: ‘Hidden spaces’ and health for all: ethical challenges in researching migration and urban health in Johannesburg, South Africa - Jo Vearey (University of the Witwatersrand, South Africa)
15	Case study 5: Health research on refugee populations in Lebanon: From a subject of study to a context and from individual interest to institutional commitment - Iman Nuwayhid (American University of Beirut, Lebanon)
20	General Discussion
35	Breakout group discussion
13.20	<i>Lunch</i>
Session 3	Questions relating to the ethics of research with migrants facing multiple vulnerabilities
14:30 10	Introduction to the theme: Chair – Susheela Balasundaram (United Nations High Commissioner For Refugees, Malaysia)
15	Case study 6: Child labour among Syrian refugees in Lebanon: Research challenges and ethics concerning a “triplely vulnerable” community - Rima Habib (American University of Beirut, Lebanon)
15	Case study 7: Ethical issues associated with research in humanitarian settings – The case of an integrated intervention to improve mental health and reduce intimate partner violence among Congolese women in Nyarugusu Camp, Tanzania - Samuel Likindikoki (Muhimbili University, Tanzania)
20	General Discussion
30	Breakout group discussion
16:00	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>
Session 4	Breakout group feedback
16.30 5	Chair – Katherine Littler (Wellcome, UK)
20	Panel session involving breakout group chairs on key issues and needs identified by their group
35	General discussion
17:30	<i>Close</i>
18.30	Meet in the foyer for departure to dinner at Osha

1 December

Session 5	IRB issues and supporting researchers
9:00 10	Introduction to the theme: Chair – Judy Makhoul (American University of Beirut, Lebanon)
15	Case study 8: Tak Provinve Community Advisory Board (T-CAB), a community engagement initiative on Thai-Myanmar border. - Napat Khirikkoekong (Mahidol Oxford Tropical Medicine Research Unit, Thailand)
15	Case study 9: : Community Advisory Boards Court Robinson (Johns Hopkins, USA)
15	Case study 10: The case for an independent Institutional Review Board for vulnerable populations. - Veena Pillai (Dhi Consulting & Training, Malaysia)
15	Case study 11: Beyond Ethics Approval: Learning Lessons and Supporting Researchers - Dónal P. O'Mathúna (Dublin City University, Ireland)
35	General Discussion
10:45	<i>Tea/coffee break</i>
Session 6	Concluding Panel
11:15 5	Chair – Kolitha Wickramage (Global Migration Health Research and Epidemiology Coordinator, IOM)
25	Panel discussion involving session chairs discussing the three questions from the meeting objectives drawing on discussion from both days
30	General Discussion
12.15	Concluding comments and thanks: Teck Chuan Voo (National University of Singapore) and Sharon Kaur (University of Malaya) on behalf of the Planning Committee
12:30	<i>Close of meeting and lunch</i>