

GFBR-SECRETARIAT

ETHICS, RESEARCH & GLOBALISATION GLOBAL FORUM ON BIOETHICS IN RESEARCH (GFBR)

NEW SECRETARIAT, SUPPORTED BY EU, COORDINATES PARTNERSHIP FOR CAPACITY BUILDING, DIALOGUE AND INCREASED AWARENESS ON RESEARCH ETHICS ISSUES BETWEEN EUROPE, ASIA AND AFRICA.

A lack of focus on ethical considerations in planning and conducting research has a risk of losing trust between the research establishment and the public, creating the danger that health research programmes will be hindered. One example of the ethical challenge faced by research investors and advocates today is the suspicion of populations in developing countries that they are being used for experimentation that cannot be done in the 'north'. Another is the tension that exists between the interests of industry, regulators, the public, researchers and political decision makers – and the difficulty these groups have to agree on ethical standards that are broadly accepted.

A partnership between the Global Forum on Bioethics in Research and the European Union's 6th Framework Programme on science and technology was started to address these issues through constructive dialogue. The partnership, supported by a grant from the EU Science and Society programme, funds a special secretariat hosted in Geneva at the Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED).

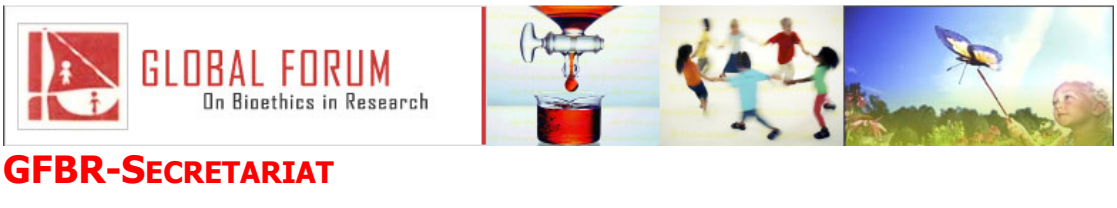
The secretariat coordinates a number of activities, aimed at increasing learning and raising awareness on research ethics issues worldwide. It also manages an international fellowship programme, which starts this month with a fellow from China who will have the opportunity to be exposed to research ethics review in EU countries.

The Forum provides a global platform for the exchange and sharing of experience and expertise on research ethics among researchers, research policy makers and ethicists, among others. It facilitates the debate on ethical, social, legal and public policy issues related to health research, and specifically of research involving countries from the north conducting research in the south. The Global Forum on Bioethics in Research was started in 1999 by the Fogarty International Center of the U.S National Institutes of Health and the World Health Organisation.

The current Forum partner organisations are: Aga Khan University (AKU), Council on Health Research for Development (COHRED), Facultad Latinoamericana de Ciencias Sociales (FLACSO), Institut National de la Santé et de la Recherche Médicale (INSERM), Medical Research Council-United Kingdom (MRC UK), National Institute of Health/Fogarty International Center (NIH/FIC), The Wellcome Trust (WT), World Health Organisation (WHO).

The secretariat host, COHRED, is a non-governmental organisation dedicated to supporting developing countries to strengthen their health research systems. COHRED activities include work in the area of ethics in health research, in partnership with developing countries.

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION

EUROPE AND ITS PARTNERS BUILDING CAPACITY IN RESEARCH ETHICS ESTABLISHMENT OF A SECRETARIAT FOR THE GFBR-SECRETARIAT

The Global Forum on Bioethics in Research (GFBR) is a growing resource for international research and policy communities interested in improving health through research. With this growth, there is an urgent need for a coordinating secretariat to ensure that learning opportunities are maintained and developed and to enhance the impact of conferences between meetings.

The GFBR-Secretariat is based on a fellowship programme that aims to build solid professional networks for ethical interaction and the opportunity for developing country ethics specialists, to engage with European institutions in research and ethics.

GFBR-Secretariat contributions:

- Enhancing networking in international health research ethics
- Capacity building in health research ethics by operating a fellowship scheme
- Exchanging perspectives on international research ethics

Key activities:

- Providing support for GFBR conferences
- Establishing a framework within which all partners can collaborate to ensure continued relevance of the Forum's activities to the global health research community
- Maintaining the 'institutional memory' and organizational continuity of the GBFR
- Assisting in identifying emerging and topical issues in international health research ethics to be addressed in future Fora
- Facilitating ongoing debate and discussions among GFBR attendees and participants
- Publishing policy and other papers in the field of health research ethics

6TH FRAMEWORK PROGRAMME OF THE EUROPEAN UNION

The Science and Society programme of the EU's 6th Framework Programme on science and technology aims to ensure that rapidly advancing progress in science is in harmony with the diverse cultural backgrounds across the continents, as well as with the fundamental ethical principles applied in the European countries, through a process of dialogue, networking, capacity building, awareness creation, monitoring and early warning. It has a specific objective to support conferences and workshops that contribute to worldwide dialogue between different cultures on important questions of global interest related to science and ethics including emerging issues.

Through a grant from the Science and Society programme in Specific Support Action of the European Commission, the GFBR-Secretariat can be established and through this European support, a great contribution to development and debate in research ethics globally, to achieving capacity building in ethical review and oversight of health research is possible to make sure that the trust needed between researchers and communities, in north and south, remains – as without this, even well-intentioned and urgent research becomes impossible.