

CRITICAL APPRAISAL OF RESEARCH PROPOSALS CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT WORKSHOP

Opening by Prof. Isaac O. Kibwage, Principal, CHS

Introduction/Overview

Distinguished Guests, Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome. In many ways, research remains one of the key pillars of academic, socio-economic and political development and advancement.

Validity and reliability of any research data and the recommendations made out of analysis of the said data depends on the study design and most importantly how the data was collected, stored and processed.

To make the best out of the aforementioned, there is need to rethink and reposition strategies for sustainable and efficient research enterprise in our institutions that play a pivotal role in the realm of research and indeed depend largely on research for national and global relevance. These institutions are: Academic, Clinical Care, Research Institutes and Governance.

One of the key strategies is expanding the number of ERCs while at the same time empowering them with the appropriate competencies and results oriented management systems.

All Institutions undertaking research are required to establish their own or work closely with already established ethics reviews committees. In Kenya, currently, there are 19 accredited committees based at universities, teaching hospitals and research institutes. KHN-UoN and KEMRI are the oldest while all the others are fairly young.

All the 19 accredited committees need urgent capacity building to ensure quality and efficiency in their operations.

Over the past three years or so, PRIME-K and collaborators, with my personal input and support, have significantly contributed towards capacity building of ERCs and also researchers and students through a multifaceted approach: Training courses (Responsible conduct of Research and Bioethics); Development of Strategic Plan; Support for extensive renovations including systems for records keeping; sensitization and involvement of policy makers; and support for operations research in Bioethics.

The Curriculum on critical Appraisal of Research Proposals is expected to impact on the Ethics Review Board/Committee Members. However, the following too will benefit

- I. Academic members of staff in Universities and Research Institutes
- II. Research Scientists (Biomedical and Behavioral/Social Scientists)

III. Post Graduate Students

Building Capacity for ERC

Ethics and Research Review Committee is an “independent” body within an institution consisting of Healthcare Professionals and non-medical members, whose responsibility is to protect the rights, safety and well-being of human subjects involved in Research. The committee also provides public assurance of that protection by among other things expressing an opinion on the research protocol, the suitability of the investigators involved, methodology of the study, the adequacy of the study sites and on the methods and documents to be used to collect the data and also inform the study participants and obtain their informed consent.

The mandatory composition of the ERC makes it imperative that mechanisms are in place to ensure that they have the necessary competencies to review the proposals and provide recommendations that are of highest standards possible.

The members must have enough experience, expertise and diversity to make an informed decision on whether the research is ethical, scientific, informed consent is sufficient and appropriate safeguards have been put in place.

NOTE that the IRB may include consultants in their discussions to meet requirements for expertise or diversity, but even then only actual IRB members may vote to make the final decision, meaning that they must have reasonable command of knowledge in research proposals.

In performing their role, ERCs committees are faced with the challenge of receiving diverse research proposals due to the ever dynamic scientific arena with new emerging medical technologies. In most cases, they lack the capacity to review some of the proposals.

This curriculum is expected to empower ethics committees to acquire knowledge and competencies of critically appraising research proposals submitting to them for review and approval

Judging from the draft outline of the curriculum you all came here to develop, and assuming that all of you participating in this workshop will put your best foot forward in developing appropriate and most up-to-date course contents and teaching methods, I see a curriculum whose impact among ERC members and researchers is immense. I urge you to take this task very seriously as it is timely, one of the major contributors in advancing research enterprise in our country and most uniquely, it is going to be the first curriculum of its kind.

With those few remarks; I declare the Critical Appraisal of Research Proposals Curriculum Development Workshop Officially open.