

## **Descriptive study on ethical review committees (ERC) in Sri Lanka**

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A questionnaire based study to review the status of the Ethical review Committees (ERC) was conducted in 12 universities (39 faculties) and 13 research institutes and associations involved in biomedical research.

8 faculties had ERC and among these 6 were independent committees. All six medical faculties had ERC. Among institutes and associations, only medical research institute and Sri Lanka Medical Association (SLMA) had ERC. Four medical faculties and SLMA had a specific application form.

Project title, principle investigators' information, objectives of the study, research methods, details about medical procedures/interventions, data analysis plan, consent procedures, subject selection criteria, potential risks to the participant, benefits/ incentives to the subjects were details requested in the application forms and were common to all application forms reviewed.

One or more of the following information were lacking in all application forms, ie. Information on consent forms, source of funding, investigations, control selection, review of literature, co-investigators' information, educational qualifications of the investigators.

Two faculties and one institute requested a nominal processing fee (Rs 250/- Rs 1000/-) for ethical review of research studies. The composition of the committee members varied. 50% (5/10) had only members of their institute as committee members, whereas the faculties of medicine, Colombo, Kelaniya and Jaffna and SLMA had members from different non-medical professions.

Except for faculties of medicine and SLMA, 22 faculties and 6 research institutes do not have a regularized process for ethical review of biomedical research. Even when an ethical review program was in place, the information requested in the application forms was not adequate and ethically relevant information was lacking in some application forms.

During the study many faculties and institutes requested more details regarding setting up of ERC in their respective institutes. In the current context there is a need to educate researchers on ethical requirements and regularize ethical review of biomedical research prior to conducting them in institutes of Sri Lanka.

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