

AT HOME @ THAMMASAT UNIVERSITY: THE CASE OF FERCAP & WHO-TDR CCTC PARTNERSHIP

Atoy M. Navarro & Kesara Na-Bangchang, Ph.D.

The terms of reference (TOR) of the *Forum for Ethical Review Committees in the Asian & Western Pacific Region* (FERCAP) was agreed upon by its founding members during its *First General Assembly*, following the *Meeting on Guidelines and Standard Operating Procedures for Ethical Review* organized by the *World Health Organization (WHO)/Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (TDR)* and *Thammasat University (TU)* in Bangkok, Thailand on January 10-12, 2000. The approval of the TOR on January 12, 2000 marked the official founding of FERCAP (FERCAP, 2000). This historical information clearly points out that right from the very start, FERCAP has been working with TU in a joint effort to contribute towards ethical review capacity.

From 2000 up to 2008, the FERCAP office was housed at the *Ministry of Public Health (MOPH)* of Thailand through the offices of the *Thai Food and Drug Administration (FDA)* from 2000 to 2004, *Department for the Development of Traditional and Alternative Medicine (DTAM)* from 2004 to 2007, and *Institute for Development of Human Research Protection (IHRP)* from 2007 to 2008. During these years, FERCAP and TU continued to work together especially in offering the annual *International Course on Research Ethics* organized with the *University of Bergen (UB) - Norway (TU, FERCAP & UB, 2003)*. Through the *Graduate Program in Biomedical Sciences (GPBMS)* of the *Faculty of Allied Health Sciences (FAHS)*, TU also helps out in the annual *FERCAP International Conference*. From 2008, TU began housing FERCAP in its Rangsit Campus. The FERCAP office was

initially located at GPBMS, FAHS, TU from 2008 to early 2009 before it moved to its present location. In early 2009, FERCAP found its new home at the *WHO-TDR Clinical Coordination and Training Center (CCTC)* at TU.

But the FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC partnership at TU is not limited to sharing office space. FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC have since worked together for the development of ethical and quality health research (Navarro, 2009). In this short article, we will present the shared vision and mission of FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC as well as examples of their successful collaborations from 2009 to 2010.

Shared Vision and Mission of FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC

WHO-TDR CCTC is a joint initiative between WHO/TDR and TU (TU & WHO/TDR, 2008; WHO/TDR, 2008). WHO/TDR Scientist and FERCAP Founding Member Prof. Dr. Juntra Karbwang-Laothavorn, TU FAHS Dean Prof. Dr. Vithoon Viyanant, and TU GPBMS Director and FERCAP Treasurer Prof. Dr. Kesara Na-Bangchang were the focal persons who facilitated the formation of the center with Prof. Dr. Kesara serving as its Founding Director (Navarro, 2009). In mid-2009, WHO-TDR CCTC declared its vision as “a leading service provider and catalyst for the development of quality and ethical health research.” The center’s mission is “dedicated to training and quality management of health research by promoting and evaluating models of integrated systems and facilitating the formation and maintenance of sustainable networks globally” (WHO-TDR CCTC, 2009b).

Not long after WHO-TDR CCTC’s declaration of its vision and mission, SIDCER-FERCAP updated its vision as “a leading global network that fosters an integrated and sustainable ethical review system towards quality culture in health research” and its mission as “dedicated to developing capacity for sustainable models of integrated quality ethical review systems through strategic alliances with health research stakeholders” (FERCAP, 2009).

From their vision-mission statements, FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC share similar goals geared toward the development of ethical and quality systems in health research through strategic and sustainable

alliances and networks. This shared vision and mission are reflected in the successful programs and projects that were collaborated on by FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC.

Successful FERCAP and WHO-TDR Collaborations

WHO-TDR CCTC conducts and facilitates trainings in health research ethics, good clinical practice (GCP), good clinical laboratory practice (GCLP), and clinical data management (CDM). FERCAP Coordinator Prof. Dr. Cristina Torres and FERCAP Research Fellow Mr. Atoy Navarro have been actively involved in various collaborative programs and projects with WHO-TDR CCTC (Navarro, 2009). On February 9-17, 2009, FERCAP participated in the *Workshop on the Harmonization of WHO/TDR Short Training Courses* where various training modules including health research ethics modules were standardized (WHO/TDR, 2009a). Prof. Dr. Juntra presented about the ethical and quality requirements in developing vaccine during the *WHO/TDR Short Course on Immunology and Vaccinology* held on May 4-8 (WHO/TDR, 2009b). Dr. Glenn Laverack and Dr. Pascal Launois of the *WHO/TDR Empowerment Unit* visited the center on May 29-30 to discuss further the partnership with the various programs of WHO-TDR CCTC (WHO-TDR CCTC, 2009a). On June 4-8, the strategic plan of WHO-TDR CCTC was developed during the *Total Quality Management (TQM) Training Workshop* (WHO/TDR, 2009c; WHO-TDR CCTC, 2009b).

FERCAP also took part in the *Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Short Courses* held on July 20-31 (WHO/TDR & WHO-TDR CCTC, 2009). On August 3-7, WHO/TDR, SIDCER/FERCAP, and WHO-TDR CCTC organized the *SIDCER-FERCAP Strategic Quality Management (SQM) Training Workshop* where SIDCER/FERCAP's strategic plan was updated (WHO/TDR, 2009d). FERCAP together with TU, UB, and the *Thailand Center of Excellence for Life Sciences (TCELS)* held the annual *International Course on Research Ethics* at WHO-TDR CCTC on October 5-7 (TU, FERCAP & UB, 2009). WHO-TDR CCTC also gave assistance during the *FERCAP International Conference on Developing Leadership in Ethical Health Research Towards Good Practices and Integrated Systems* held at Chiang Mai, Thailand on November 22-26 (FERCAP, 2009).

Collaborative programs and projects for 2010 started with FERCAP's participation in the *WHO/TDR and WHO-TDR CCTC Strategic Project Management Training Workshop* held on February 8-12 where FERCAP's project charter, project plan, and quality plan were formulated (WHO/TDR & WHO-TDR CCTC, 2010). FERCAP also consolidated the curriculum borne out of the *WHO/TDR and WHO-TDR CCTC Short Course Development Meeting on Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues (ELSI) in Biomedical Product Research and Development (R&D) in Asia* held on March 5-6 (WHO-TDR CCTC, WHO/TDR & FERCAP, 2010). FERCAP also helped out in the *Good Clinical Practice (GCP) Short Courses* held on July 20-31 (WHO/TDR & WHO-TDR CCTC, 2010). And finally, FERCAP together with TU, and the *Forum for Ethical Review Committees in Thailand (FERCIT)* held the annual *International Course on Research Ethics* at WHO-TDR CCTC on September 27-30 (TU & FERCAP, 2010).

The Future of FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC Partnership @ TU

FERCAP's partnership with TU dates back to the forum's foundation year. But recently, this cooperation was strengthened with the housing of FERCAP at TU and the establishment of WHO-TDR CCTC. FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC have a shared vision and mission and they worked together successfully on various programs and projects during the last two years.

In the years to come, it is expected that FERCAP and WHO-TDR will continue to collaborate especially with the offering of training courses as the main focus of their cooperation. Foremost of these training courses are the ongoing annual *International Course on Research Ethics* and the soon to be offered *Short Course on Ethical, Legal, and Social Issues (ELSI) in Biomedical Product Research and Development (R&D) in Asia*.

With this continuing partnership, FERCAP and WHO-TDR CCTC are indeed at home @ TU.

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