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PRESS RELEASE

ETHICS OF RESEARCH AND CARE

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ETHICAL PRINCIPLES MUST BE APPLIED TO
RESEARCH IN DEVELOPING COUNTRIES

Over the past few years, the AIDS epidemic has fuelled the development in poor countries of studies supported and initiated by public institutions and research teams from various countries. Research conducted in the South and financed by investigators from the North is constantly increasing. Also, some private companies consider these countries as first-rate for less costly and less monitored research.

Researchers' financial constraints or personal ambition can sometimes cause the respect for research ethics to be watered down and entail the exploitation of local populations.

So as to reduce risks of misconduct, various organizations have reappraised the international documents designed to monitor research. But nothing guarantees the actual implementation of the recommendations issued.

The National AIDS Council addresses this issue in its Statement on the ethical issues of clinical research in developing countries and underscores several concerns.

- All research must be related to the public health objectives of the country where it is being conducted. Any violation of this principle is, indeed, an exploitation.
- Researchers' responsibility is therefore not limited to the sole subjects of their studies, but also has a collective dimension based on principles of justice and solidarity. The representatives of one country carrying out research in another, less developed country, must accept the subsequent transnational responsibility.
- The research community must endorse its collective responsibility as regards respect for the enforcement of requirements established by the various texts on research ethics.
- Recommendations on research ethics in Southern countries can only be applied if the research community is totally willing to do so. The vigilance and participation of the various ethics committees, AIDS associations and international organizations would help ensure enforcement of recommendations.
- Corporate research can in no way be exempted from these ethical requirements. Nations, whether developed or developing, must also contribute to the application of international recommendations.