



AFRICAN MALARIA NETWORK TRUST

Validation Workshop for the Web-based Basic Health Research Ethics Course

11-15 September 2006 Dar-Es-Salaam, Tanzania

Workshop Report

Bruno Mbando, Evelyn Anane-Sarpong, Roma Chilengi, Rousseau Djouaka, Saad Ramadhani

Background

With a grant from the European Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) AMANET has developed a web-based programme that will make available, free of charge, teaching in basic human research ethics. With increased internet access across Africa, it is believed that this resource will be available to many. The lecture type contains links to other additional resource materials such as guidelines and declarations which can also be downloaded and printed out.

Before releasing this course to the public, AMANET organized a validation workshop on 11-15 September 2006 at Dar es Salaam University Computing Centre (UCC), Dar es salaam, Tanzania. Twenty five (25) fully AMANET sponsored participants took part in the weeklong validation workshop. The participants for this validation workshop comprised of members of national and institutional Ethics Committees from Benin, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Gabon, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Mali, Nigeria, Sudan, Tanzania, Uganda, Zambia and. Zimbabwe.

This was a paperless hands-on web-based pilot workshop whereby participants logged on to the AMANET website and to the web based learning system where the course is hosted. The main objectives of the workshop were to test the user-friendliness of the web based learning platform, to determine the most suitable material to put on the course and the best way to present the material before launch. Since the course is divided into modules, the evaluation work was done module by module. Very useful feedback, contributions and critique from the participants was collected and has since been incorporated in the final course which was officially launched in October 2006.

Day one

The workshop was officially opened by Dr Roma Chilengi, Course Supervisor Investigator and AMANET Clinical Trials Communicator. On his opening comments he alerted the participants to the fact that that workshop was much different from others they might have attended. That was a workshop which would have the participants largely working on their own with assistance provided only when absolutely necessary. It would be so because it was a validation workshop with an important goal of identifying all the strengths and the weaknesses of the web based training program both in terms of functionality of the computer system as well as the quality and validity of the material content in the course. He further explained that the course had ten modules; five compulsory and five optional. When the course is finally released one would be required to complete all five compulsory modules

and any two of the optional modules. At the end of each module there is a module test which for the sake of the workshop would only be made available at specific set time. He added that to pass the module test one would have to make a score of at least 70%. Mr. Saad Ramadhani, AMANET Information Technology Officer, then made a quick introduction to the participants on how to get started using the system. Mr Saad, the technical geek behind the course, introduced participants to the web address and the mandatory registration (free) procedure for enrolment into the course

Participants were further informed that told that they would have gone through the modules in a chronological order. Each module would have to be covered in a predetermined time span after which the module test would become available. At the end of the course, participants will have an opportunity to discuss their experiences in the module as well as fill evaluation forms after the test.

Module 1

This module covered the evolution of biomedical research ethics. The course materials were prepared and written by Dr. Roma Chilengi, Clinical Trials Coordinator, African Malaria Network Trust. The module was divided into two parts which the participants were asked to go through in about one hour each. The course material was presented as lecture presentation in Microsoft PowerPoint and supplemented by lecture notes in PDF.

After a few initial problems getting started, most participants were able to proceed on their own with the course materials. The room became quiet except for distant and soft keyboard punches as everyone concentrated with the online course material.

The module test was made available at 12:00. The test was timed to end in 40 minutes. Each participant was immediately able to see their score on completing the test.

Module 1 Discussion and Evaluation

At the end of the module the participants were handed a one page evaluation form for the module and were also asked to take part in the module discussion. Many participants were inclined to discuss the test questions apparently after not been able to make as high a score as they wished. Dr. Chilengi intervened and urged the participants to provide their opinions on the course content and its presentation. Participants generally felt that the course content was that relevant and well presented. However, they pointed out several areas of weaknesses such as some presentation slides were too full with content; some slides did not provide content which matched the title of the slide; there should be one or two slides at the end for review questions, one participant commented.

Module 2

This module covered the topic “Basic Ethical Principles in Research”. The module was written by Prof. Godfrey Tangwa of University of Yaoundé Cameroon and Dr. Roma Chilengi. The module material was in the form of lecture presentation in PowerPoint, lecture notes in PDF and supplementary material provided in PDF. The module test was made available after one hour and half.

Module 2 Discussion and Evaluation

Participants were again asked to discuss the module after completing the test session. Also they were handed a one page evaluation form which sought their opinion regarding module content. There was general consensus among them that the lecture presentation and the

lecture notes were relevant to this module. Except for a few participants who thought half an hour was too much time to complete the test, most felt the duration was the appropriate.

Day two

Day two began with Dr. Roma Chilengi introducing participants to the task for day which was to go through three modules and sit three module tests. He reminded them about the need to concentrate on the course material when discussing the modules and avoid the temptation to discuss the module tests.

Module 3

This module covered the topic of Ethics Review Boards, prepared by Ms. Paullina Tindana of Navrongo Health Research Centre, Ghana. The module materials were presented in two parts with each part having lecture presentation in PowerPoint and lecture notes in PDF.

Again on the conclusion of the module participants filled evaluation forms and gave their opinions on the module content and presentation.

Module 4

This module, also prepared by Ms. Paullina Tindana, covered the topic of Informed Consent. The module content was presented in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and lecture notes in PDF. The module test was then made available after participants were done with the course material.

In discussing the module, most participants were in agreement that the lecture notes and lecture presentation were very good and informative. They also suggested additional time for someone to comfortably go through the course material. Participants also commented on some of the questions saying they were either confusing or too controversial, and the need to explain the too many acronyms used.

Module 5

This module covered Ethical Requirements of Research Studies. The module was prepared by prepared by Ms. Paullina Tindana and presented in the same format as in the preceding modules.

In the evaluation form the participants were asked to express opinion on lecture notes and presentation pointing out issues of content and how it was presented. There was consensus that the lecture notes were good, however a number of participants expressed the opinion that the lecture notes were too long. In addition a participant recommended broadening the reference on lecture material. .

Day three

Module 6

The module covered the topic Vulnerable Groups. This module was written by Ms. Joyce Ikingura, Senior Research Scientist at the National Institute of Medical Research Tanzania and Ms. Rosemary Musesengwa, Director for the Medical Research Council of Zimbabwe.

In the evaluation of this module some participants expressed concern that the notes seemed too focused on some vulnerable groups and not others.

Module 7

This module covered the topic Standards of Care. The module materials were prepared by Dr. Rose Kingamkono, Director for Research Coordination and Promotion, Tanzania Commission of Science and Technology and Joyce Ikingura.

There was varied opinion about the lecture notes and lecture presentation for this module. Some comments suggested that there was a bit of inconsistency particularly regarding the introduction on the lecture notes. Another comment pointed out that the lecture presentation did not cover all the material on the lecture notes and thus one must read the lecture notes to fully understand the module. In general, most participants rated the test questions as fair.

Day four

Module 8

This module covered Researcher Responsibilities. The module material was lecture presentation in PowerPoint and lecture notes in PDF prepared by Dr. Roma Chilengi. The discussions were inevitably based on the module test. This test had one of the lowest average score. The participants generally suggested the module test questions were ambiguous and thus led to the poor performance.

Module 9

This module covered Scientific Misconducts. It was the fourth optional module. The module material was in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and lecture notes in PDF prepared by Prof. Mfutso-Bengo Joseph of the University of Malawi.

In the module discussion and evaluation some participants expressed concern that the module presentation was too detailed and could not be told from the module notes. Otherwise in terms of content they agreed the content was valid and comprehensive for the module.

Module 10

This module covered the topic of Ethical Issues in Genetic Research and Stored Tissue Samples. The content for this module was presented in the form of a PowerPoint presentation and lecture notes in PDF. The module was written by Prof. Godfrey Tangwa. The evaluation form for this module contained the same standard questions. Participants were asked to express their opinion regarding the lecture notes and the lecture presentation and they all expressed positive opinion of the material. The participants also on average pointed out that the average time needed to complete the material would be about 1 hour. Asked about the intensity of the module test they on average suggested that the questions were fair and half an hour was a fair time to complete this test.

Day five

This was the last day of the workshop and started off very busy. Participants were divided into groups which were then assigned to tackle specific number of module tests. Their task was to go through all the questions, suggest any changes they thought necessary. They were also asked whenever possible to suggest additional questions for each particular module.

On the other hand the facilitators were busy in a separate room preoccupied with amending the course materials, their presentations, notes and supplementary reading text. The amendments were based on the evaluation forms and discussions that had been held since the start of the workshop at the end of each module.

The technical facilitators were also hard at work putting the presentations, the notes and the tests in proper formatting, also using feedback gathered during the workshop.

The participants also had a courtesy visit by Prof. Wen Kilama, the Managing Trustee of African Malaria Network Trust. He took the opportunity to share his views on Research Ethics in Africa and the justification for the web based training. He thanked facilitators, participants and all others who had helped in one way or another to bring the workshop to a successful end.

Mr. Edenphonse Nfuka of University Computing Centre facilitated the last session of the workshop in which he took the participants through the interactive features of the Blackboard learning platform.

Closing

The workshop was officially concluded at 1.30 pm, at which time an opportunity was used to take a group photo. Closing remarks and certificates were reserved for the evening when there was a joint dinner with participants and facilitators of a parallel Management for African Malaria Research Leaders Workshop which had also concluded on the same day at another location in Dar-Es-Salaam. During the joint dinner certificates for the validation workshop were presented by Prof. Kilama.