

NATIONAL INSTITUTE FOR MEDICAL RESEARCH



Communication Strategy for the Ethics Review Process

Health Research Regulation Section

Directorate of Research Information and Regulatory Affairs

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NIMR Headquarters

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COMMUNICATION STRATEGY FOR THE HEALTH RESEARCH REGULATION SECTION FOCUSING ON THE ETHICS REVIEW PROCESS

1.0 Introduction

This Communication Strategy for the Health Research Regulation (HRR) Section has been developed to respond to the need of the Institute to attain its strategic Vision, Mission and Core values as are being stipulated in the NIMR strategic plan. Effective communication is a pillar to operationalize the Core values of accountability, transparency, integrity, inclusiveness and excellence, which NIMR is dedicated to embed to its staff.

2.0 Aim and Purpose

This Communication Strategy is focused on the Ethics review process to improve the provision of timely support and information to our customers to facilitate an enabling environment for application for ethics clearance for conduct of research in Tanzania.

The main aim is to improve on the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NatHREC) operations to have efficiency in order to increase NIMR performance in regulating health research in Tanzania through enduring customer satisfaction during ethics clearance review process.

3.0 The Audience

- i. Internal customers - NIMR Staff and Management
- ii. External customers – Research coordinating and regulatory agencies, ministries
- iii. External customers - Investigators, project coordinators and focal persons
- iv. External customers – Research and Academic institutions and other research stakeholders
- v. External customers - NatHREC Reviewers
- vi. External customers - NatHREC Committee members
- vii. External collaborators – International community

4.0 The approach

4.1. Management of phone calls from external and internal customers

- i. The phone should NOT ring more than four times before it is answered.
- ii. The officer responsible for answering calls will seat at the call desk to answer and make official calls to customers.
- iii. The person responsible for manning the phones will remain with the mobile phone with number +255 758 587 885.
- iv. Upon receiving a call, the person will answer only information that he or she is confident that is correct. And in case the person has no knowledge of the

- questions asked, he or she will hold on and enquire from the superior for clarification or transfer the call to the superior or relevant person so as to clarify.
- v. In case responses are not available within 10 minutes of the call, then the responsible staff member will request to call the customer back during the same day with a comprehensive response.
 - vi. The section will maintain a call log as per NatHREC SOP through Form Number 9: Communication Record Form. The Communication Record Form will be filled electronically daily using an excel sheet. The excel sheet will be filed and labelled as follows for ease of traceability. Each call log will be used for one quarter following the calendar year as follows January – March, April – June, July – September and October - December.
 - vii. In case another staff member responds to calls by customers in the absence of the designated person, she/he must record the information and inform the responsible officer for recording and inclusion to the main list.
 - viii. For visitors who physically come to the office the same procedure will be followed and information be recorded as for phone calls.
 - The person responsible for answering and transferring calls from the NIMR Landline _255 22 2121400 or from the mobile number on +255 758 587 885 will be Ms. Jamila Jassam (Quality Assurance officer).

FORM 09: COMMUNICATION RECORD FORM FOR CALLS AND PHYSICAL ENQUIRIES

S/N	Date	Attention requested	Time	Requested by	Contact information of the person made the call					Action taken	Attending officer(s)	Means of communication Call/Visit*
					Institution name	Postal address	Phone number	Mobile number	Email			

* Write which phone line was used e.g., office mobile. in case a personal phone number used also record and notify whose phone was it, the customer to be informed to use office phone numbers.

4.2. Management of acknowledgement for notification and reports received either through hard copy/ REIMS/ email/eMrejesho.

- i. Progress reports are automatically acknowledged through REIMS when submitted.
- ii. A follow-up letter will be written if there are any further issues that the investigator needs to address after review by NatHREC.
- iii. Weekly reporting of communications received through e Mrejesho

4.3. Follow up of reviewers

4.3.1. Expedited reviews

- i. Three (3) days after assigning an expedited protocol to the reviewer, an officer Jamila Jassam will call to remind a reviewer who has not submitted comments to send comments.
- ii. If the reviewer is not able to complete the review within seven (7) days since assigned, then the proposal will be re-assigned to another reviewer on the last (7th) day.
- iii. Before the assignment of the protocol to a new reviewer, the first reviewer will be notified that the application is being withdrawn for review from him/her and assigned to another reviewer.
- iv. This communication between reviewer and the Secretariat will be recorded in the communication log and reported to the Head of the Section via email.

4.3.2. Ordinary reviews

- i. Seven (7) days after assigning an ordinary proposal to a reviewer, an officer will call to remind a reviewer who has not submitted comments to send comments, by this time the assignment will have expired in REIMS.
- ii. If the reviewer is not able to complete the review within 14 days since assigned, then the proposal shall be re-assigned to another person/reviewer on the last (14th) day.
- iii. Before assignment of the protocol to a new reviewer, the first reviewer will be notified that the application is being withdrawn for review from him/her and assigned to another reviewer.
 - The person who assigns reviewers is Dr Ruby Mcharo (Quality Assurance Officer, Head of Section). Her personal phone number is +255 687250971 and office number +255 758 587 885.
 - The person responsible for calling to remind reviewers will be Ms Jamila Jassam (Administrator). Her personal phone number is +255 758 587 885.

Communication between NIMR Staff and the Reviewer will be communicated using a modified version of the Form no. 9 specifically for reviewers as shown below:

FORM: COMMUNICATION RECORD FORM FOR CALLS AND PHYSICAL ENQUIRIES TO REVIEWERS

S/N	Date	Time	Name of the reviewer	Title of proposal and PI name	Date assigned to reviewer	Date expired	Type of application*	Mobile number	Email	Action taken**.	Attending officer(s)	Means of communication Call/Visit***

* Please indicate whether expedited or normal review

** If the reviewer was changed, please indicate the name of the new reviewer.

*** Please write which phone line was used e.g. office mobile, office landline etc. In case a personal phone number is used, also record and notify whose phone it was, customers should be informed to use office phone numbers, or if the reviewer was followed physically to be reminded write "Visit"

5.0 Time frame

- i. Implementation will begin on 1st December 2022.
- ii. REIMS updates will start in March 2023 progressively as the system is being configured.

6.0 Resources/linkages needed to ensure smooth implementation of strategy

- i. Collaboration with the ICT Section to ensure all equipment are maintained and are functional.
- ii. Orientation session of the Secretariat on how the strategy will be implemented.

7.0 Risks to implementation of the strategy

- i. Unreliable internet, to ensure implementation of the proposed activities.
- ii. Technical capacity to manage/update REIMS.