

Education and Training

South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI)

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The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI) is the oldest Africa-based Master's programme in the field of health research ethics. The programme, initially a collaboration between the University of Pretoria's School of Health Systems and Public Health and the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN)'s School of Psychology in association with Johns Hopkins University, equips African health professionals with the education and practical experiences needed to provide sound ethics review of the increasingly numerous and complex health studies taking place in Africa. SARETI started in 2003 and to date has graduated 1 PhD, 14 Masters (with several more close to completion), and 22 non-degree fellows, and is currently awaiting a funding decision for a third cycle of Fogarty/National Institutes of Health (NIH) funding for 2012 - 2016.

The South African Research Ethics Training Initiative (SARETI), which is now based at the University of KwaZulu-Natal (UKZN) with collaboration from Johns Hopkins University and multidisciplinary leadership and academic staff drawn from several leading South African and international universities and research centres, aims to build African capacity for the ethical review of health research and to strengthen Africa's institutional training capacity to achieve and sustain this aim. SARETI is a comprehensive, multidisciplinary, Africa-based degree programme in health research ethics and offers training and support programmes to achieve these goals.

The SARETI Training Programme comprises a multidisciplinary, modular Master's degree with funding for four Master's trainees per annum. The core of this intensive and advanced training programme consists of: (i) modular coursework at the applicant institution; (ii) practical work with ethics review committees; (iii) attendance of an intensive USA-based bioethics programme through the Johns Hopkins Bioethics Institute and attendance of the Intensive Bioethics Program at Georgetown University; and (iv) the completion of a dissertation/research paper on a topic of relevance to strengthening health research ethics at the trainee's home institution, leading to submission to a peer-reviewed journal.

The goals of the Master's degree programme are:

- to provide trainees with a solid theoretical foundation and practical competence to conduct and lead ethics review and ethical implementation of health research in developing country settings
- to enable trainees to train others in research ethics
- to assist trainees in institutionalising research ethics review
- to prepare African professionals to assume leadership positions and to stimulate scholarship in health research ethics in developing countries
- to prepare trainees to pursue a career or further doctoral studies in health research ethics.

The MSocSc (Research Ethics) degree comprises coursework, practicals and a research dissertation leading to a publishable paper on a relevant topic in health research ethics. At least half of the credits required for the Master's degree comprise the research dissertation. SARETI has developed and registered a set of formal credit-bearing modules and has run these modules since 2003.

Listing of modules

All listed modules are 1 week long and are worth 8 credits.

1. PSYC 840 Evaluating research designs.
2. PSYC 851 Introduction to bioethics.
3. PSYC 854 Introduction to health law and health research.
4. PSYC 853 Introduction to human rights for health researchers.
5. PSYC 849 Critical issues in informed consent.
6. PSYC 856 Children and health research.
7. PSYC 847 Ethical Issues in women's health research.
8. PSYC 842 Culture, morality, and comparative ethics.
9. PSYC 843 Professional ethics in health research.
10. PSYC 852 Institutionalising ethical review of health research.
11. PSYC 846 Ethical issues in HIV vaccine trials.
12. PSYC 855 Ethical issues in international collaborative health research.
13. PSYC 845 Ethical issues in community-based research.
14. PSYC 848 Religion and ethics in health research.
15. PSYC 844 Behaviour and research.

Training components

- Using its modules innovatively, SARETI offers a **Master's Degree Programme in Research Ethics** over 2 years. The first year is intensive coursework and practicum modules, and the second a research thesis to be completed in the candidate's home setting.
- In addition, self-funded applicants may enrol for the SARETI Master's degree or for several SARETI modules and complete a **Non-degree Fellowship Programme** over a period of 3 - 6 months. There has been increasing uptake of this non-degree fellowship package by self-funded or alternately funded (EDCTP; Fogarty MEPI) students.

Education and Training

- Similarly, self-funded applicants may enrol for the three modules comprising the **Ethics Review Committee Training Programme (ERCTP)**.

The SARETI support programme supports continuing professional education of Africa-based faculty, and supports the top trainees of the training programme to attend relevant health research ethics meetings. At the end of the fifth year of the programme, SARETI organises an Africa-wide Health Research Ethics Symposium (AHRES III) to allow trainees to share their scholarly work and ethics review experiences with their peers, increase the African impact and networking potentials of the SARETI training programme, facilitate African exchange in health research ethics and strengthen Africa's voice in this field.

SARETI Master's (Research Ethics) graduates and SARETI faculty contribute to the ethical conduct of appropriate health research and development in Africa by building research ethics committee (REC) capacity, by training REC members and researchers, and by contributing to the global development and profile of African scholarship in research ethics.

The SARETI PI is Professor Doug Wassenaar and the co-PI is Professor Mariana Kruger, assisted by Professors Carel IJsselmuiden and Nhlanhla Mkhize.

SARETI Website: <http://shsph.up.ac.za/sareti.htm>