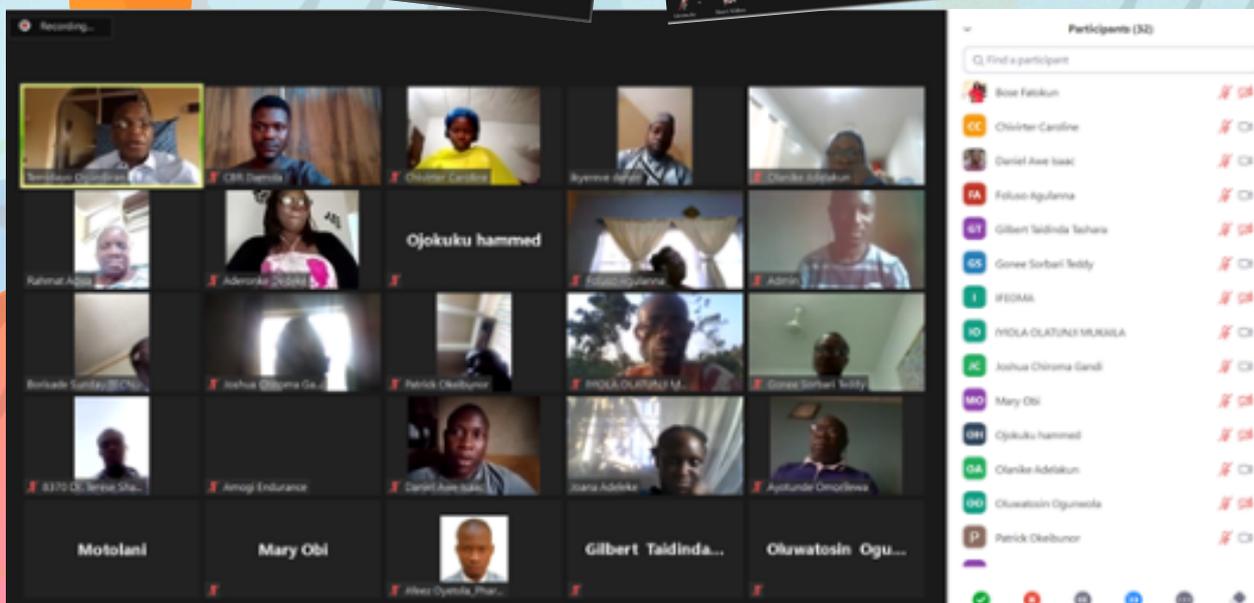




CBR NEWSLETTER

A NEWSLETTER OF CENTER FOR
BIOETHICS AND RESEARCH

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The Centre for Bioethics and Research (CBR) is the leading organization providing training in research ethics in Nigeria. CBR continues to train healthcare and biomedical research professionals on research ethics and promote research ethics to ensure the ethical conduct of research in Nigeria. Ethical issues are fundamental parts of human development it is therefore essential to create awareness on the basic principles of ethics that can help to lead a more fulfilling life whether on a Personal or Professional level.

We take this opportunity to emphasize the need to stay safe during this challenging period of COVID19 and during the yuletide season. Please continue to be steadfast in your adherence to all health and safety precautionary measures, if possible, with greater intensity in this season. This edition of the CBR Newsletter describes the activities of CBR in the Second half of 2020. We wish you a happy reading.

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1.0 Impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on the training and research at CBR

The COVID-19 pandemic caused by the virus SARS-CoV-2, is the single most important event of the year 2020. Its significance will not be limited to the field of infectious disease or even medicine, it has transformed human lives in every way, locally and globally. The full impact of the COVID-19 pandemic on higher education and interprofessional education programs is yet to be determined, however, it is clear that the pandemic is changing the way we live, learn, and work.

The possibility that such a pandemic would visit humanity was known for quite some time. The World Health Organization (WHO) had asked its member states to have national pandemic preparedness plans as far back as 1992. The pandemic has necessitated a shift to online platforms for communication, education, and research. This has become the new normal for academics, but it is a development that may be difficult for some people/organizations. The challenges facing research teams within organizational/hospital setting are complex, requiring special attention in these extraordinary times.

Infection control practices, such as handwashing and use of personal protective equipment (PPE), are now standard ways of life and hospitals are more ready with standard disinfection procedures, consumables and practices. The Center for Bioethics and Research (CBR) too has been forced by the impact of the virus to make necessary adjustments in areas of training and research. All academic programs, training, and research hosted by CBR have been virtually implemented since the outbreak of the COVID-9 pandemic. Components of our annual blended diploma program that involve face-to-face interactions have been implemented virtually to reduce the risk of infection. The COVID-19 pandemic has also affected implementation of programs and activities at the University of Ibadan and the University of Nigeria in Enugu State. Students that are working on their final research projects have been forced to work at a slower pace due to the pandemic while others have had to postpone aspects of their research work that involve interstate travel to obtain data for their work because government banned interstate travel. Faculty members of the program supervising students that are working on their final research projects have also been forced by the current situation to have virtual meetings with students that they are supervising. The Pandemic coupled with the ongoing Industrial Strike action by University lecturers has also affected the resumption of newly admitted students into the program. It has brought economic and social hardships that have made us rethink our way of life and will change our social fabric irrevocably.

2.0 Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanities

On the 27th of November 2020, the Nigerian government announced the allocation of N12 billion (\$27 million) for implementation of research projects in 12 Nigerian universities. The University of Ibadan (UI) was one of the beneficiaries of this new funding, along with 11 other Universities. At UI, the fund will support the establishment of Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TET Fund) Centre of Excellence in Multi-Disciplinary Studies to the tune of N1 billion (\$2.2 million) for take-off programs in the new Faculty of Multi-Disciplinary Studies including the new **Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanities**. Other beneficiaries are the Departments of Peace, Security and Humanitarian studies; Sustainability Studies; Data and Information Science; and Mineral, Petroleum, Energy Economics and Law.

The President, President Muhammadu Buhari, GCFR, and the Honourable Minister of Education, Mallam Adamu Adamu, selected the institutions for establishment of centers of excellence to support strategic and applications-oriented research and expertise with potential industrial applications. The allocation is pursuant to TET Fund's renewed vision to engender a paradigm shift towards cutting edge problem-solving research led by Nigeria's Tertiary Education Institutions.

The other universities and the focus of their centers of excellence that would receive N1 billion each are the University of Abuja for public governance and leadership; University of Jos and Abubakar Tafawa Balewa University for research in food security; University of Maiduguri for arid zone research and development; Usman Dan Fodio University Sokoto for urology and nephrology; Bayero University Kano for renewable energy; Michael Okpara University for root crop research and development; Nnamdi Azikiwe University for agricultural and engineering translational studies; University of Benin for aquaculture and food technology; University of Uyo for computational intelligence and the University of Lagos for biodiversity conservation and ecosystem management. The Executive Secretary of TET Fund, Suleiman Bogoro said the Federal Government graciously approved N1billion as a take-off grant for each of the universities, totaling N12billion for a five-year period. The Vice-Chancellor of the University of Ibadan was represented at the event that was held in Abuja on the 27th November 2020, during which the allocation letter was presented to the Director, Research Management Office of the University of Ibadan, Professor A. S. Jegede who is also a faculty member of the new Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanities.

3.0 Webinar on ‘COVID-19: A Case for Research Exceptionalism’ by the Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Ethics Network (PHEPREN)

Due to the global health emergency concern and unprecedented COVID-19 pandemic that has caused social and economic disruption, morbidity and mortality. The Public Health Emergency Preparedness and Response Ethics Network (PHEPREN) organised a webinar titled ‘COVID-19: A Case for Research Exceptionalism’. The aim of the Webinar was to find out whether there is a need to think about the way researchers engage in research and some of the processes.

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From top left to right, Prof. Clement Adebamowo, Ms. Katherine Wright, Prof. Ross Upshur and Prof. Alex London

The Webinar was chaired by Professor Ross Upshur from the division of Clinical Public Health at the Dalla Lana School of Public Health, Toronto Canada. Professor Clement Adebamowo, Professor Alex London and Katherine Wright were the speakers at the webinar.

Professor Adebamowo’s presentation was titled ‘Research Ethics and Research Exceptionalism in SARS – COV2 pandemic’. Ethics: Research, Preparedness and Response. During his presentation he referred to the Ebola Virus Disease (EVD) epidemic in 2014 and how the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) of Nigeria took certain decisions. He also cited a paper that he co-wrote at that time on the conduct of research during the EVD epidemic - ‘Adebamowo C, Bah-Sow O, Binka F, Bruzzone R, Caplan A, Delfraissy JF, Heymann D, Horby P, Kaleebu P, Tamfum JJ, Olliaro P, Piot P, Tejan-Cole A, Tomori O, Toure A, Torreele E, Whitehead J. Randomised controlled trials for Ebola: practical and ethical issues. Lancet. 2014 Oct 18;384(9952):1423-4” - which generated a lot of interest. Prof. Adebamowo said there has been a lot of discussion about the issues that were stated in the paper whether those issues are relevant in the Covid - 19 pandemic. He added that principles of the conduct of clinical trials and research ethics are fairly well established and there is no controversy about what the steps

should be. Professor Adebamowo said that during acute viral pandemics there are new considerations that encourage the review of already existing principles and challenge whether the paradigm is sufficient or alternatives need to be considered. He talked about the principlist approach developed in the United States and described in the Principles of Biomedical Ethics book by Beauchamp and Childress. He said these principles continue to be challenged particularly on account of insufficient consideration and application to the major public health problems in low- and middle-income countries (LMIC). He gave example of acute viral epidemics which often start from LMIC where there is often limited infrastructure, personnel and Professor Alex John London from the Center for Ethics and Policy Carnegie Mellon University made a presentation titled 'Against Pandemic Research Exceptionalism' while Ms. Katherine Wright, the Assistant Director of the Nuffield Council on Bioethics made a presentation titled ' Research in global health emergencies: An exceptional approach to trial design - what 'equal respect' entails. In her presentation, Ms. Wright talked about how research can be conducted ethically in emergencies. The focus of her presentation was on the ethical compass, in particular, equal respect for person, taking context seriously, and taking human emotion seriously. The presentations were very informative and worthwhile. A lot of Ethical issues in Research were covered during the presentations and the speakers did an outstanding job of sharing their expertise with participants that joined the webinar. The link to the presentations is available here: <https://youtu.be/xh0T3QApZnc?t=793>.

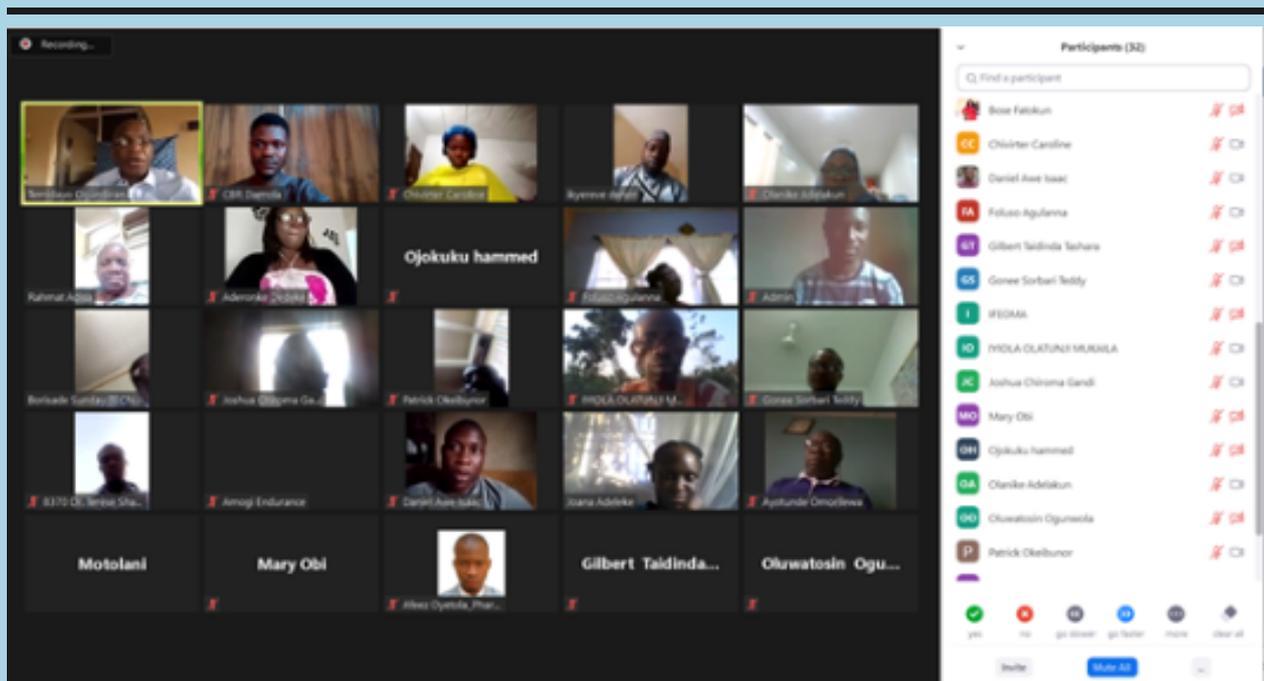
4.0 Bioethics training at the University of Nigeria, Nsukka (UNN)

The Center for Bioethics and Research continues to implement the highly successful Master's degree in Bioethics training program at the University of Nigeria Enugu. The pioneer students that were admitted into the MSc Bioethics postgraduate degree program and the Masters in Public Health (MPH) Program with Bioethics concentration are supported by the Center for Bioethics and Research. As part of CBR's effort to entrench bioethics training in Nigerian universities, CBR supports these training programs by providing textbooks, study materials, and audiovisual equipment. The MPH Students with Bioethics concentration have completed their course work and they are currently working on their final research projects with Bioethics concentration while the MSc Bioethics postgraduate degree students have completed their course work for the first semester of the current session.

5.0 Blended Diploma in Research Ethics Training

We continue to implement our highly successful blended diploma training program by providing enrolling highly qualified applicants and supporting them throughout the application process. A total of 32 applicants were admitted for the blended diploma program in 2020. The applicants included Physicians to Medical laboratory Scientists, Researchers, Nurses, Clinical Pharmacists, Epidemiologists and Lecturers.

The blended diploma program is for individuals who desire to acquire more competence in research ethics and bioethics but are unable to take advantage of the 18 months fully sponsored M.Sc. Bioethics program at the University of Ibadan. The focus is to build capacity and enhance expertise in research ethics and bioethics primarily through a comprehensive and locally relevant program in Health Research Ethics targeting experienced researchers, clinicians, academics, and research ethics committee members. The program consists of practical experiences and career-development activities directly relevant to the ethical analysis and review of research involving human participants in resource-constrained settings. The diploma program consists of 14 topics implemented in two interactive online modules, each lasting four-weeks with one-week break in between. Each module is followed 2 days of in-person Weekend Retreat meeting with the participants and faculty members. At the second weekend retreat, the entire topics for the diploma program are reviewed and the participants and staff evaluations are conducted. The participants are presented with certificates of completion for participating in the program.



Participants at the first weekend retreat of the blended diploma program for year 2020

The diploma participants are provided course materials and textbooks, reimbursement of transportation costs, per diem and accommodation during the mandatory weekend retreats by the Center for Bioethics and Research (CBR). Due to the COVID - 19 global pandemic the first weekend retreat for the current set of participants on the program this year was held virtually via zoom application. The retreats also feature a guest lecture. In the first retreat of 2020, the guest lecture was delivered by Prof. A.J. Ajuwon titled **'Public Health Research During COVID - 19 Lockdown in Nigeria: Ethical and Methodological Lessons Learnt and their Implications'**.

During the lecture, he explained that COVID-19 is a viral disease caused by SARS-CoV2 which belongs to the family of coronaviruses (Cov) that cause common cold and more severe respiratory diseases. Prof. Ajuwon said that symptoms of COVID-

19 include fever, dry cough, tiredness, and difficulty in breathing. He added that individuals may experience other symptoms like aches and pain, nasal congestion, sore throat, diarrhoea, loss of taste, loss of smell and loss of hearing.

The government in Nigeria responded to the pandemic by imposing a lock down. Other measures undertaken by the government included a stay-at-home order, work from home order for government employees, closure of airports, closure of all places that attract large gatherings such as schools, places of worship, government offices and markets. The government also banned interstate travels.

The emergence of COVID-19 has caused an explosion in new activity and renewed focus on public health threats by acute respiratory viruses. He discussed the role of more effective public health messaging to combat misinformation in online spaces and among the public. Figure 3 shows participants at the virtual weekend retreat.

6.0 Onsite Institutional Ethics Committees and Health Researchers Training

The following onsite trainings were conducted by the Center for Bioethics and Research from June 2020 to December 2020.

Institutions	Date	Attendance	Participants	Training type
Ondo State Ministry of Health, Akure	Sept. 2nd - 3rd	13	Members of Health Research Ethics Committee.	Modern Research Ethics
Obafemi Awolowo University Teaching Hospital, Ile - Ife	Nov. 11th - 12th	11	Members of Health Research Ethics Committee.	Modern Research Ethics
Alberto Health Project Initiative Abuja, Nigeria (APIN)	Nov. 24th - 26th	8	Members of Health Research Ethics Committee.	Modern Research Ethics
UI/UCH Health Research Ethics Committee.	Dec. 2nd - 3rd	33	Members of Health Research Ethics Committee.	Modern Research Ethics

CBR appreciates Professors. A. S. Jegede, C. O. Agulanna, A. O. Malomo and Associate Prof. A. O. Adejumo's commitment to these trainings. These trainings are part of the requirements by the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) for members of an Ethics Committee and the registration of newly inaugurated Ethics Committees.

7.0 Online Collaborative Institutional Training Initiative (CITI) in collaboration with BRANY, New York

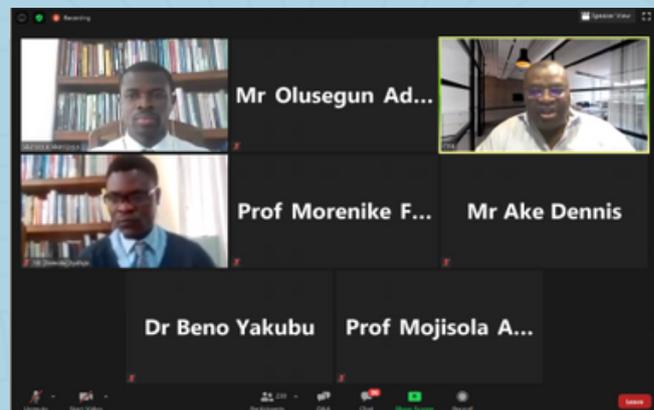
As part of our partnership with the Biomedical Research Alliance of New York (BRANY)'s CITI program, we provided 4,497 online CITI trainings in Informed Consent, Responsible Conduct of Research and a specialised module on the Nigerian National Code for Health Research Ethics from the 1st of June 2020 to 15th December 2020.

8.0 Bioethics in Nigeria Conference supported by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP) DREIN Project.

CBR organized a virtual conference tagged 'Bioethics in Nigeria Conference'. The conference was in fulfillment of one of the work packages on the Deepening Research Ethics in Nigeria (DREIN) project funded by the European and Developing Countries Clinical Trials Partnership (EDCTP). The conference was aimed at enhancing awareness among biomedical researchers and the Nigerian public of research ethics and joint oversight of clinical trials by the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) and the National Agency for Food and Drug Administration and Control (NAFDAC). It featured speakers from NHREC, NAFDAC, the Bioethics Society of Nigeria (BESON), the New HIV Vaccine and Microbicide Advocacy Society (NHVMAS) and EDCTP was represented by the DREIN project officer Ms. Nuraan Fakier.

Professor Clement Adebamowo welcomed attendees and he informed them that the successful implementation of the DREIN project in the past 3 years has been a collective effort between CBR, NHREC, NAFDAC and COHRED. He described research as an activity that invents the future, provides jobs and economic development. He concluded that for Nigeria to reap these benefits, research in the country must be conducted scientifically and ethically. He thanked EDCTP for funding the DREIN project and wished the conference attendees fruitful deliberations.

Prof. Mojisola Adeyeye, Director General of NAFDAC declared the conference open. She highlighted the need for improved collaboration between the regulatory agencies, ethics committees, and researchers. She mentioned that researchers preparing to conduct research in Nigeria need to acquaint themselves with the basic norms and regulation in research especially clinical trials. She also thanked EDCTP for their commitment in assisting developing countries to improve collaboration of stake holders in biomedical research. She thanked Prof Clement Adebamowo and the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) for their efforts in the implementation of the work packages on the DREIN project, she concluded by saying that she looks forward to future projects that will strengthen clinical oversight between NHREC and NAFDAC.



From top left to right: Mr. Akinwale Akinjiola DREIN Project Administrator, Prof. Clement Adebamowo and Mr Damola Oyafajo during Prof. Adebamowo's Welcome Address

The speakers and titles of their talks are:

- Roles and Responsibilities of Clinical Trial Stakeholders - **Mr Ake I. Dennis and Dr Yakubu Beno**
- Data Kidnap - Concerns and Interest with Systems Hacking - **Prof. Kolawole Oyedeji**. Prof. Oyedeji defined Data Kidnap a situation where an attacker illegally hijacks data from the owner through unauthorized control of a user's system or data for illegal or illicit processes.
- Ethics Review During COVID-19: An Alternative Approach - **Mr Francis Kombe**.
- Research ethics and virtual data collection - **Prof Morenike Folayan**.
- Good Clinical Practice Inspection: NAFDAC's Perspective - **Mrs Ebele P. Anto**. Mrs Anto described NAFDAC's process for Good Clinical Practice inspection to safeguard the rights, safety, and well-being of the public i.e., participants in the clinical trials and the people who will use the products of research.
- Demystifying the Ethical Clearance Process in Nigeria - **Mr Ado Danladi**. Mr. Danladi described National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) as the oversight body for research ethics in Nigeria. It was inaugurated in 2005. He mentioned that research ethics in Nigeria is decentralized with Health Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) existing at ministries of health, federal medical centres and teaching hospitals.

Ms Nuraan Fakier, the EDCTP project officer for the DREIN project gave a brief background of the DREIN project funded by EDCTP from the 2016 call. She mentioned that EDCTP has been funding an ethics and regulatory capacity scheme since 2015 to strengthen National Ethics Committees as well as the national regulatory authorities in Sub-Saharan countries. She encouraged the conference participants to visit the EDCTP website for information on grants as well as projects that have been funded by EDCTP. Ms. Fakier added that interested participants can reach her for questions and clarifications on EDCTP grant applications through the host of the Bioethics in Nigeria conference. The conference was conducted virtually on the ZOOM platform due to the global COVID-19 pandemic.

9.0 Appointments/Achievements

9.1 PROMOTIONS

- Professor S.O. Akintola was appointed as Dean Faculty of Law, University of Ibadan by the University of Ibadan.
- Professor T.O. Ogundiran was appointed as the inaugural Head of the new Department of Bioethics and Medical Humanities, Faculty of Multidisciplinary Studies, University of Ibadan.

9.2 ACHIEVEMENTS

Dr. A.O. Adejumo was appointed by the National Agency for the Control of Aids (NACA) / Federal Ministry of Health (FMOH) to conduct a situational analysis of the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC) to improve its functions.

10.0 Publications

The following are publications by faculty and staff of the Bioethics training program.

- Taiwo RO, Ipadeola J, Yusuf T, Fagbohunlu F, Jenfa G, Adebamowo SN, Adebamowo CA; Indigene Study as part of the H3Africa Consortium. Qualitative study of comprehension of heritability in genomics studies among the Yoruba in Nigeria. BMC Med Ethics. 2020 Dec 9;21(1):124. PMID: 33298068; PMCID: PMC7726892.

11.0 BeOnline Journal - Accepting Manuscripts for Review and Publication

The coronavirus global pandemic has been ravaging the world for some months, it is a highly transmittable and severely infectious disease threatening public health and safety. Although there are a lot of concerns related to covid - 19, the ethical issues remain a priority for the BeOnline Journal. The Editorial Board of the Journal is calling for articles engaging the ethical concerns and dilemmas emerging in response to both the clinical context of Covid - 19 and the research ethics space of journeying into vaccines and drug development on the viral disease. The Journal emphasizes articles with significant theoretical or social bioethical potential impact, backed by rigorous logical presentation. Submitted articles may be conceptual, empirical, or case studies. The articles may be quantitative, qualitative, or mixed modes. Main articles or essays should not exceed 7,500 words while commentaries should not exceed 2,500 words, including notes but excluding references. The closing date for submission of articles is now 31st of January 2021.

BeOnline, the Bioethics Online journal of the Center for Bioethics and Research is an open-access online journal that provides a platform for individuals to contribute to the global discourse on bioethics by adding the voice of Africans and research in Africa to the discussions about clinical and research ethics, primarily in Africa and in the world at large. We invite you to submit your work to our panel of experienced reviewers and publish in the BeOnline journal. Rapid review and decision is guaranteed. We also provide text editing support to improve the quality of your papers. Let the world hear your view about research ethics.

For more information on how to submit a manuscript for review, please visit us @ <http://www.bioethicscenter.net/journal/> or send an email to admin@bioethicscenter.net

12.0 Erratum

In our last edition we reported that Dr. Chiedozie Ike, an alumnus of CBR blended diploma program was appointed as the Head of the Research Management Office for IRRUA Specialist Teaching Hospital. Dr. Chiedozie Ike was actually appointed Head, Office of Research Integrity and Compliance of Irrua Specialist Teaching Hospital (ISTH), Irrua, Edo State, Nigeria, by the ISTH Hospital Management. We regret the error.

Closing Remarks

Thank you for taking your time to read this issue of the newsletter, your comments about the current issue, and ideas for the next issue are what will keep the Center for Bioethics and Research Newsletter an interesting and lively newsletter.

Please send contributions and suggestions to admin@bioethicscenter.net

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**Center for
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wishes you a

Prosperous New Year