

Who do you communicate your results to?

Principle 36 of the current Declaration of Helsinki¹ which guides research on humans, states that:

“Researchers, authors, sponsors, editors and publishers all have ethical obligations with regard to the publication and dissemination of the results of research. Researchers have a duty to make publicly available the results of their research on human subjects and are accountable for the completeness and accuracy of their reports. All parties should adhere to accepted guidelines for ethical reporting. Negative and inconclusive as well as positive results must be published or otherwise made publicly available. Sources of funding, institutional affiliations and conflicts of interest must be declared in the publication. Reports of research not in accordance with the principles of this Declaration should not be accepted for publication.”

So, once you have collected data, you have no option but to make it publicly available and the best way to do this is to publish your study in an accredited medical journal.

“If it is not written down, it did not happen.”

There are various other ways in which you should disseminate your results:

- **Communication to the Scientific World:**
 - Presentation to Department of Paediatrics and Child Health (this might also include presentation at Faculty Academic Year Day).
 - Presentation to all collaborative Departments/stakeholders.
 - Write and publish a manuscript in an accredited medical journal.
- **Communication to Ethics and other committees:**
 - Final written report to Ethics Committee and any other committee who needs report.

¹ World Medical Association. Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical principles for medical research involving human subjects. WMA Policy. Seoul: World Medical Association [Online] 2008 [access 2012, July 9]; Available: www.wma.net/e/policy/pdf/17c.pdf

- **Communication to the public and stakeholders**
 - o If there is a forum for presenting research findings to for example the Hospital or clinics where the research was done, it is good to do a presentation at this forum preferably before you submit the article to a journal.
 - o If there is no forum for presentation to the health authorities, and your results are not favourable towards the Department of Health, you should send a summary of the results and/or a copy of your article to the Department of Health to inform them about your findings. It is unfair to publish an article with poor health services/outcomes and let the Department of Health read about it in a journal or worse, in the newspaper.

- **Communication with participants:**
 - o This is of course difficult if you use already collected data and do not have access to the participants. But you should always think whether there is any way in which you can communicate the findings to the people whose data you used.

Gie, R., & Beyers, N. (2014). Getting started in clinical research: Guidance for junior researchers. Cape Town: Department of Paediatrics and Child Health, Faculty of Medicine and Health Sciences, Stellenbosch University.