Reviewer's report

Title: Informed consent in Sri Lanka: a survey among ethics committee members

Version: 8 Date: 25 April 2008

Reviewer: Dominique Sprumont

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Both reports (the first review and the re-review) written together with Dr. Jérôme Ateudjieu, MD, MPH, African coordinatoor of the project TRREE for Africa (www.trree.org).

I am globally satisfied with the changes introduced in the article. The authors may still want to offer a more detailed and critical discussion on the gap between the answers obtained and the recognized requirement at the international level. For instance, the mere fact that the resources and capacities of the local ERCs are limited does not justify the interpretation according to which ERC approval of all research involving human subjects should not be obtained systematically. The same remark applies to the discussion of written informed consent and the special situation of illiterates. Again, it seems that the authors accepted the participants’ answers as a matter of fact and do not argue in favor of a stricter interpretation of the rule of informed consent. At the end, one can fear that the limited resources justify the fact that ERCs in Sri Lanka are unable to fulfill their tasks properly. One would have appreciated a more critical discussion on this, especially how to improve the situation within the current resources available. At the end, the article gives the impression of relativism which is in contradiction with the clear requirements established for instance by the Declaration of Helsinki.

Level of interest: An article whose findings are important to those with closely related research interests

Quality of written English: Acceptable

Statistical review: No, the manuscript does not need to be seen by a statistician.