

# Evaluation of ethical issues in collaborative studies

Professor N. Sartorius, MD, PhD,  
FRCPsych.

Geneva, Switzerland

# Reasons for collaborative studies

- Scientific interest – some subjects have to be studied together (e.g. rare cases) or in a special place (e.g. impact of climate)
- Social interest – to build networks which may start as joint studies and grow into personal and institutional partnership
- Personal or political interest – some studies are built on existing friendships or policies

# Factors increasing likelihood of successful collaboration

- Personal "chemistry" of the investigators
- Presence of the coordinator
- Scarcity of resources
- Presence of local enemies
- Frequent contacts/meetings of investigators
- Exotic locations
- Involvement of "significant others"

# Ethical rules of collaboration

## Rules 1 – 4

- Goals of collaboration must be set jointly by all the investigators
- The pace of collaboration has to be set thinking about the slowest participant
- Collaboration must not exhaust any partner
- The interpretation of the results must be based on the consensus of all participants

# Ethical rules of collaboration

## Rules 5 - 7

- The ruling of the Ethical review committee in the strictest centre should be applied in all centres
- The first publication of the project should present the total set of results (in agreement with all investigators and signed by all of them).
- The use of data should be discussed before data collection starts and recorded in an agreement signed by all.

# Ethical rules of collaboration

## Rules 8 - 10

- The collaboration should contribute to the positive image of the centres and of their countries' research and service
- The collaboration should leave useful traces behind it (e.g. staff trained in particular research methods)
- Collaboration should serve as a bridge for learning about the centres and their countries