

# Leadership and Quality Assurance in Psychiatric research

Professor N. Sartorius, MD, PhD,  
FRCPsych

Geneva Switzerland

# Issues addressed

- Selection of topics for research
  - General considerations
  - Topics for research in developing countries
- Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration in research
- Quality assurance in psychiatric research
- Publication of results of research in developing countries

# Selection of topics for research

- The criteria for the selection of a topic for research might include
  - Which topics are currently most popular
  - How much time will the study take
  - What resources (human and material) are available at my centre
  - What will be the long term research line in my department

# Selection of topics for research in a developing country

- The criteria for the selection of a topic for research in a developing country might include
- The general criteria for the selection of a research topic
- The specific features of the country in which the research will take place

# Selection of topics for research in a developing country

- The specific features that should be examined in selecting a research topic in a developing countries might include
  - Problems of particular local importance
  - Access to particular population groups
  - Lower cost of personnel
  - Topics likely to give visibility to centre in which the research is done.

# Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration in research

- Collaboration can
  - create networks supporting the entire programme of the centre
  - Provide access to resources that are not available in the centre
  - Facilitate the publication of results
  - Offer training opportunities
  - Provide inspiration for changes in one's centre

# Advantages and disadvantages of collaboration in research

- Collaboration however also has disadvantages including
  - Collaborative research takes longer than research without collaboration with other centres
  - Collaboration might require changes in the goals of the project (so as to make participation of all possible)
  - There are risks of unethical collaboration

# Quality assurance in research

- Quality assurance of mental health research relates to
  - The selection of the topic of research
  - The ethical requirements for research
  - The selection of the method for the investigation
  - The interpretation of the results
  - The publication
  - Collaborative arrangements (if any)



# Quality assurance in research: selection of the topic of research

- The topic of research should be relevant to the
  - Goals of medicine,
  - Advancement of science
  - Improvement of the quality of work of the institution in which the research has been carried out
  - Advancement of knowledge of the participating investigators

# Quality assurance in research: observance of ethical requirements

- Research should correspond to the ethical requirements of research including
  - **Avoidance of harm** to the subjects of research or any other persons
  - The likelihood of **beneficial effects** for patients
  - A contribution to **distributive justice** (i.e. the equitable treatment of all those in need)
  - **Confidentiality**
  - **Respect for the autonomy** of those who are selected as subjects for research

# Quality assurance in research: selection of the methods of research

- The methods selected for the research
  - Should satisfy general ethical criteria
  - Should be appropriate to research goals
  - Should be appropriate for use by the personnel who will participate in research

# Quality assurance in research: interpretation/publication of results

- The reasoning used in the interpretation of the results of the analysis must be transparent
- The publication of results should give credit to those who participated in the studies
- Negative findings should be published

# Leadership issues

- Leaders should propose topics for research, not impose them
- Leaders should be just in their review of suggestions for future research involvement
- Leaders will give preference to proposals generated in their group unless they are likely to split the group

# Leadership issues

- Research provides an opportunity to strengthen the cohesion among all those participating in research
- Leaders should focus on
  - the selection of topics for research,
  - on strict adherence to ethical rules,
  - on prevention of burn-out of investigators and
  - on assignation of credit for work done

# Final comments

- Research in developing countries can be an important path to international recognition and collaboration
- The quality of research in the third world must be at least as high as that in the highly developed countries
- Leaders should use research to strengthen their teams' confidence and productivity