Research Integrity Challenges in Developing Countries

Dina Siniora, MBA, PhD (second year) in Health Care Ethics (and Graduate Assistant for Dr. Gerard Magill), Duquesne University

Andrew Faramnd, MD, Msc. In Clinical Neuroscience (UCL), Researcher at Neurosurgery Department, University of Pittsburgh Medical Center

Research integrity addresses adherence to high moral codes, values and professional principles, supplemented by professional institutions and research organizations. The concept of vulnerability is reflected in guidelines that address research integrity. Informed consent, the base of bioethics, is a tangible indication of respect for people, particularly for vulnerable populations. It aims to protect the human dignity of research participants and the rights of researchers. Nevertheless, it is an insufficient means to protect participants from exploitation.

In developing countries, several factors: lack of access to health services, reduced autonomy, lack of awareness of human rights, illiteracy, poverty and lax regulatory oversight can undermine the integrity of the research and increase the likelihood that vulnerable people are exploited. Researchers need to manage the social, political, and environmental factors in developing countries that can aggravate human vulnerability and threaten the integrity of the research.