

Abstract:

There is growing concern about the reuse and exploitation of biological materials (human tissues) for use in research worldwide. Most discussions about samples have taken place in developed countries, where genetic manipulation techniques have greatly advanced in recent years. There is very little discussion in developing countries, although collaborative research with institutions from developed countries is on the increase. The study sought to identify and describe ethical issues arising in the storage, reuse and exportation of samples in a developing country. Research protocols presented to two Ethics Review Committees in Kenya during a period of two years were reviewed. A record was made of the protocol title, sample collected, request for storage, reuse or exportation and whether or not subject consent was sought. The findings indicated that about 25% out of the 388 protocols sought permission for reuse and only half of those actually informed subjects of the contemplated re-use. Less than 20% requested storage and again, about half of them sought consent from subjects. There is an indication that investigators do not see the need to seek consent for storage, reuse and exportation of samples. It is proposed that these issues should be addressed through policy interventions at both the national and global levels.