Ethics in Myanmar: Research ethics, local capacity development, and malaria

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Interdisciplinary perspectives

- Philosophy and Ethics -> Medicine
- Public Health -> Epidemiology
Overview - Applied ethical and scientific challenges in Myanmar

- **Ethical**
  - Research ethics, public health ethics
  - Establishment of national Institutional Review Board (IRB)
  - Professional development

- **Scientific**
  - Malaria elimination
  - Malaria research capacity
  - Ethics of malaria interventions - mass drug administration for malaria
Research Ethics Training Initiative Myanmar

• Grants
  ○ Open Society Foundation grant
  ○ Fogarty International Center of US NIH
  ○ Pre-existing bioethics training grant in the Middle East (PI: Henry Silverman of UMB)
Research Ethics Training Initiative Myanmar

- One-year hybrid USA-Myanmar training to faculty members of Ministries of Health and Defense and MMA
  - 4 candidates (each from University of Medicine, DMR, DSMRC and Defense Services Medical Academy) selected
  - Participated in 3-week intensive course in bioethics at the UMB, along with 8 trainees from the Middle East, at the UMB in August 2015.
  - Followed by online and in-person training (led by Silverman and Nyunt) in Myanmar and an individual hands-on project in bioethics
Project 1: Attitudes, Knowledge and Practices of Research Ethics in Myanmar

- Questionnaire with 3 sections
- Survey of Burmese researchers
- Various research institutions throughout the country
Ethics Review Committee at DMR

- Equivalent of US IRB
- DMR's ethics review process is very different compared to the US
- New guidelines (published 01.2016) for submission reference
  Declaration of Helsinki, CIOMS guidelines, and WHO guidelines
Presentation on vulnerable populations
Institute for Global Health, Myanmar:
Malaria research and local capacity development

Dr. Christopher Plowe

Dr. Myaing Nyunt & Poe Poe Aung
Project 2: Pilot targeted mass treatment for malaria in Thanintharyi, Myanmar

- Collected baseline data to support elimination and to gather buy-in from country leadership and local malaria communities
  - **Baseline:** cross-sectional survey of 1750 individuals
  - **Intervention:** targeted mass treatment (TMT) for malaria
  - **Follow-up:** 4 and 12 month follow-up surveys

**Timeline:**
- Baseline survey: March 2015
- Intervention: TMT May - Jul 2015
- Follow-up survey: May 2016
Project 2: Pilot targeted mass treatment for malaria in Thanintharyi, Myanmar

- Evaluation of intervention effectiveness
  - Data organization and analysis
  - Written reports
  - Collaboration with local NGOs, government, and IGH
Evaluation of pilot TMT in Myanmar for malaria elimination

Prevalence of malaria for each cross-sectional survey by intervention
Ethical considerations for mass drug administration for malaria elimination

- **Targeted mass treatment = mass drug administration**
  - Treatment of the entire population in a defined area with antimalarial drugs without first testing for malaria infection (asymptomatic)

- **Ethical considerations**
  - Risk-benefit balance
  - Individual versus public interest
  - Autonomy - informed consent

White et al. 2016
International collaboration with UMB-IGH, Myanmar

- Monitoring and evaluation training
- Ethics training
- Malaria elimination
- Targeted mass treatment for malaria
Thank you!!