

**ESIC Medical College & PGIMSR, KK Nagar, Chennai**

**Medical Education Unit**

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**Guest Lecture**

Topic: Ethical practice of health research: an experiential perspective

Speaker: Dr. Varalakshmi Elango MD.

Date: 12 April 2017                      Time: 2.30 pm to 4.00 pm

Venue: Conference Hall

Dr. Varalakshmi Elango is a freelance consultant, working with the World Health Organization (WHO), Drugs for Neglected Diseases Initiative (DNDi), and the Special Programme for Research and Training in Tropical Diseases (WHO/TDR). She has worked with the Global Health Ethics Unit of the WHO as well as the Good Laboratory Practices and Good Health Research Practices trainer for the WHO/TDR. She is currently the coordinator of all the regional training centres of WHO/TDR around the world. She serves in the Ethics Committee of the School of Public Health, SRM University. She is a member of the core group developing an online course for ethics committee members on research ethics, an initiative of the National Institute of Epidemiology and ICMR in collaboration with the WHO.



*The Dean felicitating Dr. Varalakshmi Elango*

She gave a talk on ethical practice of health research. She started by narrating her own experience of doing research as part of her MD dissertation and how she learnt so much about ethics of health research from that experience. Highlighting the importance of competent,

independent and impartial ethical review of research through good ethical committees, she narrated her experience with several poor quality ethical committees as well as excellent work class ethics committees of WHO standards. She recalled her experience of visiting remote African countries with limited resources and poor capacity for health research and ethical review. She raised the question, “when resources are so poor and possibility of good quality research meagre, should one do research at all?” and responded that even under such circumstances justice considerations compel the conduct of good research.



She used the Emanuel Wendler framework of seven criteria that make health research ethical, namely:

Social and scientific value, scientific validity, fair participant selection, favourable risk-benefit ratio, independent ethical review, informed consent and respect for potential and enrolled participants.

She explained these ethical considerations with examples. She concluded by mentioning that there is a need for capacity building in research and research ethics, integration of bioethics into medical curriculum, hands-on practical workshops to teach research ethics and robust guidelines and regulatory framework.