

# COMMUNIQUE OF THE **2025 EXCEL RITE CONFERENCE**

On Exploring Excellence  
In Collaboration, Ethical  
Conduct, And Leadership  
For Research Integrity  
Through Empowerment

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## Preamble

The EXCEL RITE Conference — *Exploring Excellence in Collaboration, Ethical Conduct, and Leadership for Research Integrity Through Empowerment* — was convened from April 28th to 30th, 2025, at the Institute of Human Virology Nigeria (IHVN), Abuja. Jointly organised by IHVN and the National Health Research Ethics Committee (NHREC), it brought together over 300 stakeholders, including the leadership and representatives from NAFDAC, the Federal Ministry of Health, the Federal Ministry of Health and Social Welfare, academics, government officials, development partners, and students.

The conference provided a strategic platform to examine Nigeria's research integrity landscape, identify critical gaps, and develop sustainable institutional and national frameworks that promote responsible conduct of research.

## Objectives

1. **Develop** and strengthen national and institutional frameworks for research ethics and research integrity.
2. **Enhance** the ethical competence and capacity of researchers, ethics committees, and institutions.
3. **Foster** multi-sectoral collaboration and shared ownership of ethical research practices in Nigeria.
4. **Initiate** discussions to generate actionable recommendations for an effective research policy and guidelines development for research Integrity.
5. **Advocate** for the institutionalisation of Research Integrity in Nigeria.





## Day 1 | Building Foundations for Ethical Research

- Anecdotal reports of unaddressed or poorly managed authorship problems in scholarly communications at our higher institutions.
- NHREC's operational capacity remains limited due to long-term underfunding, affecting oversight, licensing, and state, regional and institutional HREC coordination in Nigeria.
- The poor administrative infrastructure of research ethics across Nigeria impedes the ability to enforce ethical standards nationwide.
- Institutional monitoring systems for Health Research Ethics Committees (HRECs) are lacking in many institutions.
- Poor knowledge, awareness and collaboration among researchers on research integrity in Nigeria.





## Day 2 | Ethical Capacity and Structural Reform

- Competence gaps in ethical review persist, and many state-level HRECs lack websites or public accountability mechanisms.
- NHREC, State HRECs and regional HRECs lack the infrastructure and resources to build and maintain ethical integrity and ensure the responsible conduct of research at national and regional levels.
- Inadequate institutional structures cannot prevent issues such as plagiarism, publication and ethical misconduct from happening.
- Need to scale up and sustain the recently acquired NHREC IT portal for protocol application and submission. Ownership and sustenance by the government are much needed.
- Streamlining Nigeria's research ethics code, policy documents and guidance for easy use, accessibility, and detailed guidance and information is an important step
- A lack of independent funding of HRECs in states, regions and academic institutions in Nigeria alters their function, immunity from bias, institutional leadership control and political influence.
- Lack of career pathways and investment in the field of ethics and research integrity in Nigeria make it largely unattractive to young professionals and keep it from reaching its potential.





## Day 3 | Collaboration and Commitments for the Future

- IHVN pledged to support NHREC to train 100 personnel active in the field of research ethics from the six geopolitical regions in Nigeria in Research ethics and research integrity within a one-year time frame.
- A sustained national advocacy campaign to create awareness on the need and the importance of a strong and effective research governance to support the nation's efforts in research ethics and research integrity will be launched. This advocacy will be supported/driven by NHREC in collaboration with IHVN.
- The EXCEL RITE leadership will undertake engagement with the relevant government ministries and agencies to advocate for the positive changes we want to see and close the gaps noted in the conference consensus by visiting the following:
  - Coordinating Minister of Health and Social Welfare, Prof. Muhammad Ali Pate, CON
  - Minister of Education, Dr. Tunji Alausa
  - Minister of State for Health, Dr. Iziaq Adekunle Salako
  - Minister of Science, Technology and Innovation- Chief Uche Geoffry Nnaji
  - Tertiary Education Trust Fund (TETFUND)- Arch Sunny Echono
  - Nigeria Universities Commission (NUC)- Professor Abdullahi Yusufu Ribadu



## Conference Consensus

- Institutions should adopt formal authorship policies with authorship roles clearly defined at the start of each research project. The practice of gift authorship, retrospective approvals, and denial of credit to junior researchers—especially students—must be discouraged. Clear policies and sanctions are needed.
- NHREC, state, regional and institutional HRECs should be restructured and resourced to grow a sustainable ethics infrastructure in Nigeria. Institutions must synergise to support, advocate and sustain initiatives and policies developed by NHREC and relevant stakeholders to build Research Integrity and research ethics in Nigeria.
- A formal Research Integrity/ Responsible Conduct of Research framework should be established/institutionalised in all tertiary institutions in Nigeria to address research misconduct, questionable research practices and foster a culture of responsible research.
- NHREC's new IT portal—recently funded by the US CDC and Gates Foundation—will improve operations through online protocol submissions and tracking; however, country ownership and sustained funding are needed for scale-up and sustainability.



- Nigeria's National Ethics Code should be redesigned as a standalone policy with detailed guidelines to enhance usability and implementation.
- Institutional Ethics Committees should be allowed/encouraged to receive/attract independent funding outside of Internally Generated Revenue (IGR) controls.
- Career pathways in research ethics and research integrity through investment from government and private partnerships should be formalised, drawing on international best practices in developed countries such as the US and the EU to develop a critical mass of experts who will support sustainable innovation and development in the field of research ethics/research integrity in Nigeria.



## Immediate Next Steps and Responsible Person(s)/Institutions

Action Points	Focal Person(s) and Institution Responsible
1. Disseminate the conference communiqué and initiate strategic engagements with the Federal Ministries of Health, Education, Innovation, Science and Technology, TETFUND, NUC and other key stakeholders and policymakers, to facilitate the implementation of recommended reforms.	Steering Committee comprising representatives of the following institutions: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>NHREC</b> – National Health Research Ethics Committee</li> <li>• <b>IHVN</b> – Institute of Human Virology Nigeria</li> <li>• <b>OAU</b> – Obafemi Awolowo University</li> <li>• <b>UNILAG</b> – University of Lagos</li> <li>• <b>UI</b> – University of Ibadan</li> <li>• <b>AAU</b> – Ambrose Ali University</li> <li>• <b>UNIOSUN</b> – Osun State University</li> <li>• <b>NIMR</b> – National Institute of Medical Research</li> <li>• <b>NIPRD</b> – National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development</li> </ul>
2. Support NHREC and institutional HRECs to implement the resolutions at the national and regional levels.	NHREC, supported by Steering Committee Representatives
3. Conduct Institutional visits to advocate for resolutions/observations discussed during the conference.	Steering Committee led by PI Dr Mensah and Project Coordinator Nnakelu Eriobu
4. Publish and disseminate a detailed conference Proceedings with timelines and assigned responsibilities and organize two post-conference webinars for further capacity development and awareness creation.	



## Conclusion

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Participants underscored the urgent need for robust leadership, collaboration, national commitment, and sustainable financing to reposition Nigeria's research environment and to address the perennial lack of effective research policies and guidelines.

All participants signed the EXCEL RITE Declaration of Commitment, affirming their resolve to champion ethical research and foster integrity at their institutions..

### ***Signed:***

**Prof. Richard Adegbola** – Chair, NHREC \_\_\_\_\_

**Dr. Charles Mensah** – Project PI, IHVN \_\_\_\_\_

**Dr Patrick Dakum** – Steering Member, IHVN

**Prof Alash'le Abimiku** – Steering Member, IRCE, IHVN

**Prof. Morenike Ukpong** – Steering Member, Obafemi Awolowo University (OAU)

**Prof Clement Adebamowo** – Steering Member, University of Maryland, Baltimore, USA

**Prof Oyewale Tomori** – Steering Member, West Africa Network of National Academies

**Dr Chiedozie G. Ike** – Steering Member, Ambrose Alli University, Ekpoma

**Prof Ebun Adejuyigbe** – Steering Member, University of Medical Sciences, Ondo (UNIMED).

**Prof Kola Oyedeji** – Steering Member, University of Lagos (UNILAG)

**Dr Margaret Mafe** – Independent Consultant, Steering Member

**Prof Adebayo Adejumo** – Steering Member, University of Ibadan (UI)

**Prof Oliver Ezechi** – Steering Member, National Institute of Medical Research (NIMR)

**Dr Samuel Okhale** – Steering Member, National Institute of Pharmaceutical Research and Development (NIPRD)

**Dr Tunde Alabi** – Steering Member, University of Lagos (UNILAG)

**Dr. Aishatu E. Adaji** – Steering Member, Osun State University (UNIOSUN)

**Dr. Aminu Yakubu** – Steering Member, Federal Ministry of Health, Abuja.

**Barrister Babatunde Bamigboye** – Steering Member, Nigerian Data Protection Commission (NDPC)

**Dr Nnakelu C. Eriobu** – Project Coordinator



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