



EthiNewz

Message from the Chair

Dear EthiXPert Partners and Stakeholders,



EthiXPert will be celebrating its sixth birthday anniversary on 11 May 2024! In our first newsletter, we look at the journey EthiXPert has travelled since its inception, with a special focus on the opportunities ahead.

As the chair of the EthiXPert Board of Directors, I am honoured to welcome you to the first edition of our newsletter, EthiNewz. We aim to use this media to update our partners and stakeholders on how this small but promising organisation, is impacting the health research field. Through EthiNewz, we envisage regularly informing you about new networks and projects and the outcome of such projects over time, in addition to sharing some newsworthy trends and developments in typical areas in which EthiXPert is involved. We urge you to stay connected and use EthiNewz as a resource of information, opportunities and possible expansion of your networks.

EthiXPert's vision is to inspire responsible and ethical research in and for Africa. This cause is relevant to research institutions, policymakers, funders, researchers, communities, and oversight bodies like research ethics committees who recognise the need for mechanisms to support ethical research across the continent. The implications of globalisation, technological advancements, and the fallout from the COVID-19 pandemic are just a few of the many reasons for such ongoing attention. The recently published Cape Town Statement on fairness, equity, and diversity in research, affirms that unfair and unequal research procedures can harm research integrity (<https://www.wcrif.org/guidance/cape-town-statement>). The Statement calls for educational programmes and other initiatives that can promote fair research practices throughout the research life cycle. This begs the question, of how EthiXPert can serve Africa in advancing its moral research footprint on a global scale.

EthiXPert is guided by five main values, that motivate our strategic decisions and actions:

- 1. Ubuntu: Emphasising the interconnectedness of all people and collective well-being*
- 2. Care: Ensuring that the well-being of all is at the forefront of our mission*
- 3. Integrity: Upholding the highest standards of integrity trust and transparency*
- 4. Collaboration: Believing in the collective strength of diverse perspectives and talents*
- 5. Fairness: Commitment to fairness, equal opportunities and equitable outcomes for all*

"It takes a village to raise a child", is a well-known African proverb. In this vein, EthiXPert acknowledges that collaborations and partnerships are mission-critical to achieving its vision.

We also recognise that accomplishing our mission of building Africa’s capabilities to deliver responsible and ethical research requires us to walk the extra mile with our stakeholders, encourage diverse views and stay relevant by being receptive to their feedback and advice. We look forward to hearing from you, our “village” as we build a sustainable company.

Wishing you a happy, healthy and successful 2024!

Retha Visagie

Chairperson: EthiXPERT Board of Directors

EthiXPERT overview and what it does

Introduction:

EthiXPERT is a not-for-profit Pan African company registered in South Africa on 11 May 2018.



Established on the backdrop of calls for Africa to proactively engage in finding solutions to address existing health and social challenges in Africa, EthiXPERT aims to build ethical and responsible research capacity in and for Africa. Our approach is to offer relevant training aimed at developing knowledge and skills in the field and develop tools to support the effecting functioning of systems and structures established to promote the ethical conduct of research.

Target partners and stakeholders: EthiXPERT focuses on building capacity around three main areas, namely health research, research ethics, and research integrity. Consequently, our target audience revolves around health and social research stakeholders in Africa. These include research institutions, institutions of higher learning, researchers, research integrity officers, research ethics committees and administrators. EthiXPERT endeavours to partner with relevant role players including decision-makers, research institutions, implementing agencies and of course, funding organisations. Together we identify research gaps and develop sustainable and culturally acceptable evidence-based solutions. Our strategic actions involve providing platforms and guidelines for ethical research, offering training to empower researchers to make ethical decisions, and fostering strategic partnerships to collaborate and enhance ethical practices.

Products and Services

Health research is a dynamic, expensive and competitive endeavour. Operating within a context marred with a high disease burden and sub-optimal scientific output, there is every

reason to believe that sustainable health research achievements and development can only occur through synergy and collaborative partnerships. Premised within the context of achieving the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals numbers 3 (Good health and well-being), 10 (reduced inequalities) and 17 (partnerships for the goals), we are convinced that no single individual, organisation, or government can single-handedly realise the desired optimal health goals, quality of life and social development without the support of other institutions and society at large. Through this conviction, EthiXPERT partners with relevant role players, including decision-makers, research institutions, implementing agencies and funding organisations to identify important research gaps and to develop and deliver sustainable and culturally acceptable evidence-based



solutions. A key strategic solution and potential area of partnership is training: In the years of our operation, we have built a strong portfolio working with research ethics committees, researchers and research institutions to co-create and deliver training in health research, research ethics and responsible conduct of research. Our training is tailored



to suit the needs and unique requirements of our partners. As such, we work closely with our partners to identify critical needs, before developing a curriculum to effectively respond to the identified needs. We pride ourselves on using experiential learning to make our training targeted and responsive to the practical challenges faced by our audience. To find out more about our training initiatives, contact us via info@ethixpert.org.za.

Policies and guidelines

As health research systems in Africa continue to grow, there is a need to ensure a supportive environment to support this growth. Unfortunately, most institutions still lack the capacity to develop and lobby for the approval of appropriate frameworks necessary for health research system development.



EthiXPERT has created a niche in supporting regulatory authorities, including national health research authorities, medicine regulatory authorities and national research

ethics committees, as well as research ethics committees, to identify gaps in their systems and work together to develop more progressive frameworks to ensure a conducive environment for robust ethics review and responsible conduct of research.

Online ethics review platform

Research ethics committees (RECs) remain one of the critical instruments for health research oversight. However, as clinical research continues to grow in magnitude and complexity, RECs in Africa are increasingly required to use streamlined ethics and information management digital systems to ensure ethics in Africa is reliable, efficient and of outstanding quality. Failure to do so may expose research participants to avoidable harm and exploitation. EthiXPERT provides RHInno Ethics, an online ethics review and information platform for RECs to address this gap.



Developed to offer an automated system for all users, including administrators, reviewers and researchers, to track submitted research protocols the platform enables RECs to manage the entire review cycle with the click of a button. EthiXPERT hopes to enhance the capacity and efficiency of ethics reviews in Africa through the platform. Using standardised online review tools would also enable the harmonisation of ethics review processes in Africa. Here are 10 reasons why RHInno Ethics is a must-have for all RECs:

1. Enhanced quality and efficiency ethics review.
2. Easy tracking of protocols through real-time alerts
3. Secure storage of information and documents
4. Seamless communication across all users
5. No more paper
6. No long waiting periods
7. No lost documents
8. Easy integration with other research information systems
9. Enhanced control of research activities
- 10 Standardised and harmonised research review processes

Eager to learn more about this platform? Visit <https://www.rhinno.app> or contact info@ethixpert.org.za to book a demo.

Interested in partnering with us? In the next edition, we will share more information on how you can partner with us under the various portfolios and what the impact of our projects entails. Stay tuned!

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