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## Research in resource-poor settings: an historical perspective

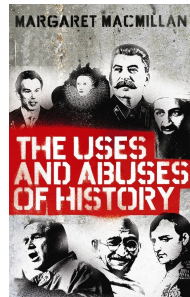
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Academic Partner of WMA  
Institute of Health Law, Neuchâtel (Switzerland)  
CIOMS Executive Committee

WMA Meeting on the Revision of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) – Research in Resource-Poor Settings  
Vatican City, January 18, 2024

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**“The past is a foreign  
country; they do things  
differently there”**

L. P. Hartley

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**What these men have in common?** CI MS




Gaetano Donizetti (1747-1848)  
Qianlong Emperor (1711-1799)  
Al Capone (1899-1947)  
Cesare Borgia (1475-1507)  
Edouard Manet (1832-1883)  
Toulouse-Lautrec (1864-1901)

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**Why the Tuskegee Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male (1932-1972) ?** CI MS



left: unidentified subjects, nurse Eunice Rivers, Dr. David Albritton, and Dr. Walter Edmondson. National Archives  
From: <https://historycollection.com/20-photos-tuskegee-syphilis-study/>


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## Why the Study of Untreated Syphilis in the Negro Male in Tuskegee (1932-1972) ?

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Tuskegee AL

Resource-Poor Settings: a natural condition?


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## Why the Guatemala syphilis experiments (1946-48)?

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Patients from the Guatemalan psychiatric hospital who participated as test subjects in the syphilis experiments between 1946 and 1948 From: National Archives and Records Administration - [https://www.archives.gov/research/health/cdc-cvrtler-records?\\_page=7.63384704\\_1068043691\\_1651240776-663863849\\_1649431776](https://www.archives.gov/research/health/cdc-cvrtler-records?_page=7.63384704_1068043691_1651240776-663863849_1649431776)

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## Why the Holmesburg Prison experiments ?

“Here was a golden opportunity to conduct widespread medical tests under perfect control conditions.”



Philadelphia Bulletin depicting Holmesburg Prison in 1966 In: Cristina Mejia Visperas, *Skin theory : visual culture and the postwar prison laboratory*, New York University Press, 2022, p. 1

Holmesburg Prison seen from the air; Philadelphia, Pennsylvania  
From: [https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmesburg\\_Prison/media/File:Holmesburg\\_Prison.jpg](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Holmesburg_Prison/media/File:Holmesburg_Prison.jpg)

### Resource-Poor Settings: a natural condition?

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## WMA Draft Code of Ethics on Human Experimentation 1962



«Section IV. Experiments conducted solely for the acquisition of knowledge

C. C. Deleted under pressure of the United States where drug development relied extensively on the use of prisoners: 50-90% of initial drug trials conducted on prisoners.

In: [Ethical Research: The Declaration of Helsinki, and the Past, Present, and Future of Human Experimentation](#), Ulf Schmidt, Andreas Frewer, and Dominique Sprumont (eds); Oxford University Press, April 2020, Appendix 2b, p. 563

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**The geographics of vulnerable populations ?**

## History of Research in Resources-Limited Setting v. the History of Tropical Medicine

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## Tropical Medicine

- Caring for the individual health of the exploiters/colonizers.
- Treating the community health of the indigenous population:
  - to protect the health of the exploiters/colonizers,
  - to maintain the workforce for the benefit of the exploiters/colonizers.

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## From Tropical Medicine to Colonial Medicine

«Then my father discovers, after all these years of feeling close to the Africans, their relative, their friend, that the doctor is only another actor of the colonial power, not different from the policeman, judge or soldier. **How could it be otherwise?**»

Jean-Marie Le Clézio, L'Africain, Mercure de France, 2004

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## Legacy of the Tuskegee Syphilis Study and Colonial Medicine in Research Ethics and Public Health

- Low trust about medical research in African-American population and beyond
- Low trust about public health interventions in African-American population and beyond (HIV/AIDS, COVID)

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## 1982 CIOMS Proposed International Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects

“The purpose of the **Proposed Guidelines** was to indicate how the ethical principles that should guide the conduct of biomedical research involving human subjects, as set forth in the Declaration of Helsinki, could be effectively applied, **particularly in developing countries**, given their socioeconomic circumstances, laws and regulations, and executive and administrative arrangements.”

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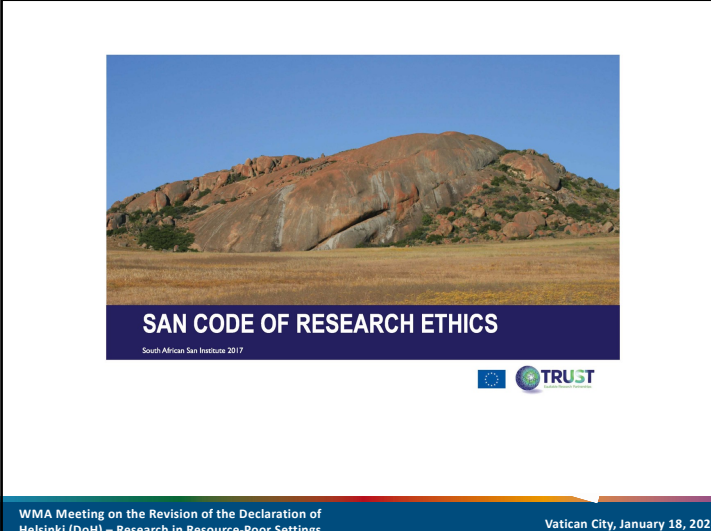



## 1982 CIOMS Proposed International Guidelines for Biomedical Research Involving Human Subjects

“Assessment of risks and benefits: Few developing countries command the resources or expertise - notably in toxicology or clinical pharmacology - to support the complex regulatory apparatus now considered mandatory for new drug development in industrialized countries. **However, it is essential that drugs of potential value against diseases endemic in these countries be tested within the populations at risk.** Decisions relating to their investigation and subsequent use should be made in the light of local judgement and experience, and directed to practicable options rather than unattainable ideals. **The community itself should be equitably represented in the planning of such investigations,** but international advisory bodies can offer a valuable resource to developing countries faced with such responsibilities.”


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The slide features a photograph of a large, rounded rock formation in a dry, open landscape under a clear blue sky. Below the image, the text "SAN CODE OF RESEARCH ETHICS" is displayed in white on a dark blue background. A small logo for "South African San Institute 2017" is visible below the text. To the right, there is a logo for "TRUST" with a globe icon. At the bottom of the slide, a dark blue footer contains the text "WMA Meeting on the Revision of the Declaration of Helsinki (DoH) – Research in Resource-Poor Settings" on the left and "Vatican City, January 18, 2024" on the right.

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### Moving Away from Exploitation toward Respect and Collaboration at the National and International Level

- Promoting research for the (health) benefits of the targeted population
- Respecting the targeted population not only in terms of autonomy but also participation from the design of the study and its governance to the dissemination of the results and their translation into medical practice and public health

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