

Research involving Indigenous populations: A paradigm shift for Peruvian researchers

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In Peru, research in Indigenous People's health has been going on for over twenty years^{1, 2}. This has mostly used the theoretical guidelines of Western science, both qualitative and quantitative and bioethical. Only recently, questions have arisen about what considerations should be taken into account throughout the entire research process³.

Generally, researchers try to make the potential benefits greater than the potential risks to participants, but there are risks that we do not observe. After participating in a research on HIV and syphilis in an Indigenous population, these "other" risks were exposed and surprised a whole group of researchers.

This was a reason to approach members of the Indigenous world and attempt, together with them, to respond and clarify our doubts. Part of this approach included the participation in the Global Forum, where, in addition to Western research in Indigenous health, we found that also Indigenous Peoples have been involved in the development of an ethical framework that allows research to be performed without increasing vulnerability of the individual or endangering the collective welfare of Indigenous communities.

Questions were asked, such as 'Why did people refuse to participate?', 'What is the best way to publish the results?', 'Is informed consent a format or is it a process?' These questions have arisen in other contexts as well. Listening and talking with Indigenous community delegates has made us think about the need to rebuild our paradigm of research and reassess the values and principles of Indigenous life. This would involve the development of specific recommendations for research involving Indigenous Peoples.

Unfortunately in my country, Indigenous Peoples, especially the Amazon, are one of the groups most forgotten and in a neglected state⁴, so the challenge in bioethics and research is even greater. We should start to acknowledge the existence of the other (another culture) and then build the process from both eyes, which some would call an intercultural approach.

¹ Hern WM. High fertility in a Peruvian Amazon Indian village. *Hum Ecol.* 1977;5(4):355-68.

² Perú, Ministerio de Salud. Oficina General de Epidemiología. Análisis de la situación de los pueblos indígenas de la Amazonía peruana. Lima: MINSA/OGEE; 2003.

³ Fuentes D, Revilla D. Consideraciones éticas para la realización de investigaciones en comunidades nativas de la selva amazónica del Perú. *Rev Peru Med Exp Salud Pública* 2007; 24(1): 52 - 66

⁴ Defensoría del Pueblo. Informe Defensorial N° 134. La Salud de las Comunidades nativas un reto para el estado. Lima 2008. Documento en Internet. [Fecha de acceso Enero 2009]. Disponible en: <http://www.defensoria.gob.pe/inform-defensoriales.php>