

INVESTIGATING COMMUNITY ATTITUDES TOWARDS MEDICAL RESEARCH TRIALS

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Conducting medical trails of new drugs within real-life communities is a very challenging process. Pharmaceutical companies often work in partnership with medical trial research centres based in Africa and Asia. Communities in the locality of these centres are often the subjects of repeat trials, raising key questions about their willingness to participate, their motivation and fatigue. The Wellcome Trust provides significant funding to these medical trial research centres, and wanted to explore and understand the community perspective more fully, to inform the ethics process that underpins medical trials.

I was commissioned to facilitate 4 communities in Kenya, Nepal, Thailand and Vietnam to use participatory filmmaking to explore their attitudes towards medical trials being conducted in their localities. The participatory process of community film-making enabled communities to explore their perspectives on medical research being undertaken within their communities.



The films formed the central focus of an 'International Conference on Community Engagement in Medical Trials' in Thailand, 2012. In the conference I explained the participatory filmmaking process and the project methodology, and I screened the 4 films to delegates from medical research institutions. Critically, the films allowed for the investigation, and further discussion, of ethical issues involved in real-life medical trials within communities. The insights provided by the films informed the conditions upon which The Wellcome Trust provided ongoing and future funding for medical trials.

Due to the participatory and ethical nature of this research, the films and report are not open to public scrutiny.