

# Review of: "Responsible Governance of Genomics Data and Biospecimens in the Context of Broad Consent: Experiences of a Pioneering Access Committee in Africa"

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Control of access to genomic data and biospecimens is essential for protecting human subjects in research and for ensuring that the data is utilized for the purpose it is meant for without exploitation. This is one of the pillars of ethical control of research on human subjects. This manuscript highlighted the establishment of the Data and Biospecimens Action Committee for Africa (DBAC) as a semi-autonomous committee to ensure controlled access to genomic data, especially those generated through the H3 Africa Consortium. The semi-autonomous arrangement ensured that there was little influence by various organizations on the operations and decisions of the committee. The role of the Data Access Committee that reviewed requests for genomic data and made decisions was with these premises in mind: the use of such data with plans to plough back the results to benefit Africa; evidence of collaboration for capacity building and access to non-profit organizations appeared well grounded. These principles were adhered to in the assessment of the 28 requests received over a 5-year period, and these were largely from the US and UK (the main funders). Conditional approval was the usual outcome, and the reasons for this were provided convincingly. The manuscript emphasised the importance of collaboration to avoid exploitative research, and this was well discussed. By collaborating with researchers in Africa, there would be greater involvement of African researchers in the day-to-day running of the studies and data generation, there would be hands-on experience of handling data, and it would be a win-win situation for all those involved in the collaborative effort.

Overall, this is a well-written manuscript, the first of its kind from Africa and a reflection of progress and sound ethical practice. The authors need to provide a legend for Figure 3, a Venn Diagram describing the requests received, for better understanding. Now that the H3 Africa project funding has ended, what will be the next phase of the activities of the DBAC? The article is recommended for all researchers in the genomic and biospecimens space.