

Swiss TPH Collaboration Guidelines: Partner, Client and Customer Relationships

The objective of the Swiss TPH is to contribute to the improvement of the health of populations internationally and nationally through excellence in research, services, and teaching and training. Our strategy involves a broad interdisciplinary approach to maintain a consistent process between the laboratory, field, bench and bed. We address many levels of innovation through research, training and services – developing concepts, methods and products; validation – providing evidence for what works; and application – strengthening public health systems and policies.

To help us achieve our objectives, representatives of the Swiss TPH are requested to adhere to the guidelines for staff conduct and relationships with external partners laid out in this document.

Guideline Goals

- Anticipate, avoid and deal with conflict of interest
- Protect academic reputation and credibility
- Protect public trust in science and academic institutions
- Avoid biased research priorities
- Assess influence on policy and practice
- Maintain quality and integrity of scientific results, publications, and presentations
- Support critical thinking about risks and benefits
- Fulfill self-governance and academic freedom of academic institutions
- Harmonize the internal approach to Swiss TPH mandates

Principles

In all areas of its activities (research, training, and services) the Swiss TPH depends on partnerships, collaborations, and, in service provision, client relationships. We therefore pursue the following principles:

- Collaborations must fit into the overall strategy of the Swiss TPH and its respective departments.
- Conflicts of interest with other Swiss TPH units/departments/institutional interests must be actively avoided.
- Collaborations and partnerships of different Swiss TPH departments will be coordinated at inter-departmental level to safeguard a common Swiss TPH approach.
- Possible risks for the reputation of the Swiss TPH will be systematically assessed and documented for each new collaboration, partnership, or other contractual relationship.
- Partners with whom the Swiss TPH works or who fund Swiss TPH projects must be committed to the aim of improving public health. This excludes the acceptance of funding (for research and services¹) sources whose products have substantial adverse effects on health (for example: tobacco or arms industry). Industries with a reputation of being environmentally damaging, such as the gold mining industry, will also not be accepted.
- The Swiss TPH must be comfortable with its partner's broad mission, public image, and potential public health impact not just in the area of mutual concern.
- The Swiss TPH is attentive to indirect collaborations and will avoid them unless a direct relationship with the partners would also be acceptable.

¹ with the exception of providing individual medical or travel medicine services

- Scientific integrity must not be compromised by Swiss TPH partners: this includes, but is not limited to, selected protection of proprietary information and the freedom to publish. In the area of service provision Swiss TPH will strive to include the right to publish results into its contracts.
- Agreed joint actions should be based on sound scientific evidence and moral principles.
- Work undertaken with the Swiss TPH will not be exploited purely for public relations or marketing purposes, or for forwarding an agenda that is inconsistent with improving public health.
- Swiss TPH partners will be alerted to perceived or real conflicts of interest, and declare in good faith if any threat to these guiding principles is identified.
- Swiss TPH partners must comply with all relevant laws and regulations, including tax law, charity law and data protection.
- Donations must be given in good faith and allow the Swiss TPH to retain intellectual integrity over its projects. The terms of any support must not conflict with or hinder Swiss TPH goals, plans and policies, and must not affect the independent governance and decision making of the Swiss TPH.
- Swiss TPH partners should strive to ensure that the human rights of those on whom they have an impact – employees, customers, local communities, and in particular the right to the best available standard of health, and the right to information – are upheld.
- Swiss TPH partners are expected to provide inspiration and direction through demonstrating and sharing best practice for publications, research, and etc.
- In accepting contracts and grants from extramural sources, Swiss TPH expects that full direct and indirect costs of the activity are recovered. This is a protection against the use of public and Swiss TPH funds for private gain. In the case of nonprofit and federal, or cantonal sponsored research or mandate, the Swiss TPH may agree to share some costs, usually in the form of contributed effort, administration costs, etc. In the case of grants from independent philanthropic foundations, the Swiss TPH may occasionally waive indirect costs as a form of cost sharing.
- In accepting contracts and partnership relationships, Swiss TPH will carefully assess the financial risk related to such engagements and will refrain from them if the likely risk is higher than 5% of the Swiss TPH annual budget.

Implementation, Monitoring and Coordination within the Swiss TPH

Funding or collaboration decisions that have no potential conflicts with these guiding principles will be made within their respective service departments. Where questions of potential or perceived conflicts arise, the Director of the Swiss Tropical Institute will make final decisions. Responsibility for enforcing and monitoring these guidelines follows Swiss TPH signature regulations and must always be reviewed by at least two appropriate staff members.

These guidelines have been approved by the 56th Swiss TPH directorate meeting on 30 October 2008.

References

Oxford Health Alliance (a partnership between Oxford University and Novo Nordisk
<http://www.oxha.org/about/supporting-oxha/>

Gill Walt, Ruairi Brugha, Andy Haines, *Working with the Private Sector: the Need for Institutional Guidelines* BMJ 2002;325:432-435 (24 August)