



AfrECC Governance Bylaws

Background

AfrECC, the African Esophageal Cancer Consortium, was founded in 2016 with a view to bring together research and clinical activities on esophageal cancer in East and Southern Africa, for greater scientific, patient and public health benefit. In its first three years, several African and international institutions have been actively involved, and the consortium is clearly needed and of interest to many groups. These bylaws concern consortium management, but intentionally do not extend to authorship rules, contractual agreements or data or material transfer or other agreements between institutions, which will be handled individually, given the variety of activities within the consortium.

Rationale

With an increasing number of members and activities, and membership fluctuation over time, there is a need for bylaws and documentation of activities. These bylaws are intended to assist in:

- Organization of the consortium, including overall structure and definitions and responsibilities of different structural groups
- Decision making, documentation of decisions and activities, and consortium memory within a dynamic AfrECC membership
- Providing a structure and bylaws needed for obtaining infrastructural and research funding
- Ensuring maintenance of the consortium.

Structure

Full Membership Group Secretariat Steering Committee Working Groups Etiologic Studies
Clinical Studies Advocacy, External Relations, and Fundraising

In the following we define AfrECC membership categories, the AfrECC Full Membership Group (FMG), the AfrECC Working Groups (WGs), the AfrECC Steering Committee (SC), and the AfrECC Secretariat.

AfrECC Membership and the Full Membership Group

AfrECC is a consortium composed of full and observing institutional and individual members. A full member of AfrECC is an institution or individual which/who is leading a study, activity, analysis or intervention related to esophageal cancer in Africa, is active in at least one AfrECC WG and has a written AfrECC membership application approved by the Steering Committee. An observing member is an institution or individual which has an interest in the subject matter and

typically has an intention to become a full member within a reasonably short time frame, but it is not yet actively involved in an AfrECC WG and/or has not submitted a membership application.

Duties of both full and observing members:

- Regular exchange and discussion of ideas
- Participate in at least two (1/3 of the) bimonthly conference calls each year

Additional duties of full members:

- Participate in the Full Membership Group
- Participate in at least one Working Group activity
- Commit time and effort to accomplish group activities
- Participate in the election of the Steering Committee
- Participate in other decisions (such as changing the bylaws)

The Full Membership Group (FMG) is the governing body of AfrECC, and it is composed of all full members. The FMG has final authority for all decisions in AfrECC, and it can overrule decisions by any other group. In arriving at FMG decisions, including the election of the Steering Committee, each full member will have one vote.

The FMG will hold regular bimonthly conference calls for information purposes that will be organized by the AfrECC Secretariat. During these conference calls, Working Group (WG) chairs will report on the activities in their WG, the Steering Committee (SC) will report on overarching activities, and all members will be invited to report on any additional news or issues they wish to be discussed during the conference call.

The FMG will also hold regular face-to-face meetings at least once every two years, with the agenda to be proposed by the SC together with the WG chairs, after which it will be shared with all members for suggestions and finally approved by the FMG. The meeting agenda will be distributed by and the meetings will be planned logistically by the AfrECC Secretariat, with the support of local organizers.

AfrECC Working Groups

AfrECC Working Groups (WGs) are subgroups within the consortium that are focused on related activities (etiologic studies, clinical studies, etc.). WG members are active in this WG's defined area. WGs can be created or dissolved by the FMG, with all full members of the FMG (not just those in the WG in question) voting on this decision.

There can be many ongoing studies within each WG. The management and structure of the WG will be the responsibility of the WG, not the FMG, e.g. the WG will decide about ways and timing of group communications and record-keeping, the election of a WG Chair(s) and/or a Steering Committee, etc. In WG elections, only the WG members will have a vote.

The consortium will start with three Working Groups: Etiologic Studies (descriptive studies, case-control studies, cohort studies, GWAS studies, genomic studies, etc.); Clinical Studies

(early detection, treatment, palliation, quality of life and survival studies.); and Advocacy, External Relations, and Fundraising.

Each Working Group will have a Chair or co-Chairs and/or a Steering Committee, as they wish. The Chair(s) will keep track of WG membership and inform the Secretariat about changes in membership, will promote and monitor the progress of activities within their WG, and will make sure new relevant information within the WG is shared in a timely manner. To achieve these goals, WG chairs may organize telephone conferences or other group communications among WG members, as they wish, but WGs will not be supported by the AfrECC Secretariat. Rather, they will need to ensure their own support for planning and carrying out conference calls, writing minutes, and archiving all information assembled in the WG. WG Chairs will also summarize the progress of their WG at FMG conference calls.

AfrECC Steering Committee

The AfrECC Steering Committee (SC) serves the FMG to facilitate activities that would be logistically difficult or too time-consuming for the full FMG. The SC will consist of 7 individuals, each from a different full member institution and a majority from African institutions, who are able to ensure a sufficient time commitment for this activity. Individuals serving on the SC will be elected for two-year terms by all full individual members of the FMG, and individuals elected to the SC can serve up to three consecutive terms. Before each election, the details of the nomination and election procedures will be proposed by the SC and approved by the FMG.

Duties:

- Attend at least four (2/3 of the) bimonthly SC group calls per year scheduled at a set time during the off months of the FMG calls.
- Discuss issues raised in the FMG that require problem solving in a more efficient smaller group, and prepare recommendations for decision-making by the FMG
- Make decisions on issues delegated to the SC by the FMG
- Approve new full members and discontinue inactive members
- Represent the Consortium in dealings with outside groups
- Liaise with WG Chairs on the progress of their activities
- Enhance communication within and outside the Consortium
- Plan infrastructure support for the consortium
- Plan face-to-face meetings of the FMG

AfrECC Secretariat

The AfrECC Secretariat is proposed by the SC and confirmed by the FMG. The Secretariat facilitates the work of the SC and the FMG, but not the WGs. It is up to the Secretariat to delegate the individual duty tasks as they deem appropriate.

Duties:

- Plan and arrange FMG conference calls
- Write up minutes of FMG conference calls and face-to-face meetings
- Archive consortium documents

- Receive and review new membership applications
- Keep records and up-to-date addresses of all members
- Plan and arrange SC conference calls and write up minutes of those calls
- Keep the AfrECC website up to date
- Coordinate AfrECC activities at AORTIC
- Other activities as needed/assigned by the SC

AfrECC Conference Calls

FMG conference calls are held bimonthly, on the first Wednesday of even-numbered months at 4 pm (GMT). Conference calls are organized by the AfrECC Secretariat, who will distribute the agenda and instruct members how to join the call. Prior to the call, the Secretariat will make sure that one full consortium member who will be present will moderate the call, and that the Chair(s) of each WG (or their delegate) will be present and prepared to report on and moderate the discussion of the activities of their WG.

The Secretariat will take minutes of the calls, including decisions made and action items to be addressed. Each WG Chair will review the minutes and make sure that progress within their WG is properly documented and then the minutes will be distributed to all members.

Amendments to the Bylaws

Changes to the AfrECC Governance Bylaws can be proposed by any full member and must be approved by a majority vote of the Full Membership Group.