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Statement from the Inserm Ethics Committee on BCG Vaccination in Africa as Part of the Fight against COVID-19

- Ethics Committee Members

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Statement from the Inserm Ethics Committee on BCG Vaccination in Africa as Part of the Fight against COVID-19

At its plenary meeting on April 8th 2020, the Inserm Ethics Committee discussed the ethical questions raised by a video that had gone viral on social networks. This video presented a dialogue between two colleagues concerning the administration of BCG in Africa in the context of the fight against COVID-19. The Inserm Ethics Committee expressed its unambiguous disapproval of the comments made, even if they were taken out of context in this video, and note that the colleagues concerned have since publicly apologized.

These thoughtless remarks are all the more unacceptable given that similar well-monitored clinical trials are already underway in Australia and the Netherlands, and soon in France. Even if BCG has been used for a hundred years with low to zero inconvenience and risk, any clinical trial must be conducted with the same methodological rigor and the same ethical criteria here as elsewhere.

As it expressed it in its note reviewed by several international colleagues "From Informed Consent to Negotiated Consent: An Approach to Research Among Unevenly Developing Countries? (<https://hal.archives-ouvertes.fr/inserm-02333140v1>), the Inserm Ethics Committee strongly condemns any position that seeks to take advantage of the vulnerability of individuals.

The Inserm Ethics Committee wishes to recall that through its own activities and those of the Inserm Ethics Review Committee (CEEI/IRB), the Inserm has for many years established a mutually respectful dialogue and partnership with African investigators. On its web page, the Inserm Ethics Committee will continue to develop the very many initiatives carried out with our African colleagues, several of whom work on local sites built and financed by the Inserm or by its research agency for AIDS and hepatitis research (ANRS).