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SRNT 2025 GLOBAL PRESENCE WORK ADVISORY GROUP

FINAL REPORT

WITH RECOMMENDATIONS FOR THE SRNT BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Global Presence Work Advisory Group (WAG) Members

Chairs: Megan Piper, University of Wisconsin, US
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Section 1: WAG Meetings Overview

Meeting 1: Identifying Issues, Discussion, Outcomes

- Provide more direct support and mentorship to increase capacity for and use of tobacco research.
- Agree that SRNT does not control the research agenda and cannot ensure funding for studies in Low- and Middle-Income Countries (LMICs).
- Identify what recommendations are reasonable and feasible for SRNT to encourage the publication and presentation of more research from LMIC researchers in developing countries.
- Recognize barriers to membership in SRNT, e.g., culture, participation, value. However, these barriers do not translate to disinterest in regions. The issue is how can SRNT realistically connect, regardless of membership, in ways that are relevant to SRNT's mission.
- More information is needed from researchers in LMICs on how SRNT can increase engagement, regardless of membership.

Meeting 2: Member Survey Results, Discussion, Outcomes

Responding members support SRNT having more of a global presence and generally supporting LMIC researchers, though most are not willing to pay higher dues in order to do so. A minority of respondents support SRNT actively working to influence public policy in LMICs. More research is required in this area, particularly to ascertain specific needs of LMIC researchers and how SRNT can best respond within limited financial and volunteer constraints.

Discussion

The Global Presence Work Advisory Group highlighted the distinction between focus on growing membership globally, and increasing the number and type of resources most relevant for researchers in LMICs. The latter is very much in keeping with SRNT's mission of dissemination.

Upon review it was recognized that the economics of LMIC membership do not bear out. For example, LMIC members pay \$20 for membership, and SRNT in turn spends \$65 to provide those members with a journal subscription that they may or may not utilize, especially as the Journal is provided in the English language. Thus, SRNT is expending more than it receives for every LMIC member and cannot track the benefit of the expenditure for either SRNT or the member.

The WAG reassessed SRNT's measure of success in LMICs (especially with multiple variables, e.g., cost of dues, visibility of SRNT, language barriers that hamper participation, inability to attend the SRNT Annual Conference, inability to meaningfully participate in Networks, etc.), with possible focus on a relevant transactional relationship.

Outcomes

The following recommendations were made as a result of these discussions:

- SRNT consider investing a reasonable amount of resources in disseminating the science specifically in LMICs, focusing on methods (e.g., SRNT-U) to provide centralized information/education/tools/resources that will benefit LMIC researchers and SRNT.
- SRNT consider supporting the development of member researchers in LMICs with appropriate capacity based on existing SRNT infrastructure, using technology and other sources to maximize access to and dissemination of resources.
- SRNT consider taking a more proactive role in reaching out to and communicating with researchers in LMICs to periodically collect information on needs and issues.
- SRNT consider methods to more deliberately export scientific knowledge base from more established countries to LMICs.

Meeting 3: Member Comments Results, Discussion, Recommendations

Member comments on the issue of Global Presence were, overall, supportive of the Guiding Principles and Boundary Standards as presented. Twenty-Three (23) members provided comments, representing responses from 2% of the SRNT Membership (compared to the 39% response rate from the Member Survey); and just under 27% of the total number of responses received (86) during the Member Comment Period.

Although there were miscellaneous comments on individual Principles or Standards, only one significant discussion issue came out of the Member Comment period that needed to be addressed by the Global Presence WAG, which was to consider rephrasing language in Guiding Principle 3: Ability to Impact Global Policy.

The Global Presence WAG agreed on a language change for Guiding Principle 3 from:

*“SRNT recognizes the value of partnering with adjacent communities (e.g., public policy groups and NGOs working to impact policies, regulations, and/or legislation) in LMICs across the world. **SRNT will support groups working to change policies, regulations, and laws, as financial and volunteer resources, as well as member engagement, allow.**”*

to

*“SRNT recognizes the value of partnering with adjacent communities (e.g., public policy groups and NGOs working to impact policies, regulations, and/or legislation) in LMICs across the world. **SRNT will support groups working to enact, implement, and defend evidence-based policies, regulations, and laws, as financial and volunteer resources, as well as member engagement, allow.**”*

Additionally, the work group members emphasized that SRNT is careful not to say it ‘won’t participate in advocacy’ because the Society does sign onto letters to legislators as long as evidence is supported. SRNT will engage in this type of advocacy outside the US, as long as appropriate evidence exists.

The WAG members indicated they would be willing to review final drafts of the LMIC surveys and were interested in continuing their participation in this area.

Section 2: Recommended Guiding Principles and Boundary Standards, Final

Guiding Principle 1: Membership

SRNT is an international membership association operating on the global stage. All members are entitled to the same benefits of membership, regardless of location.

Boundary Standard 1A: Membership Benefits

Membership benefits include, but are not limited to:

- Registration discount for the SRNT Annual Meeting (with eligibility for LMIC-designated travel awards; Conference registration is waived for all researchers from LMICs)
- Complimentary online subscription to the SRNT Journal, Nicotine & Tobacco Research
- Ability to participate in any of eight topical Networks
- Full access to all educational content housed on the web-based SRNT University
- Ability to participate in activities such as serving in volunteer leadership roles and on committees, task forces, and work groups
- Ability to comment on issues of concern to SRNT and/or its membership
- Ability to impact the future of the Society through feedback to the Board of Directors and, according to eligibility, to elect members to the Board representing specific geographical regions

Boundary Standard 1B: Focus on Supporting Researchers

Increasing membership should not be the primary measure of success; expecting all nicotine/tobacco researchers, regardless of country, to need the same benefits—or to have the same ability to access those benefits—assumes a one-size-fits-all Society. Cultural barriers, language barriers, financial barriers, technology barriers, and other unknown barriers may reduce the attraction of Society membership, notably for those working in lower- and middle-income countries. In those areas, SRNT should focus on helping researchers access the support they need to succeed rather than requiring membership as the means for accessing support.

As part of Phase II of SRNT 2025 to be undertaken in 2020, an LMIC needs assessment survey will be conducted, which will help the Board to focus on actual, rather than assumed, needs and challenges.

Rationale

Deliberations by the Global Work Advisory Group identified that SRNT's focus on providing better access to resources and information for researchers in LMICs is a higher priority than increasing LMIC membership, which can be problematic because of barriers such as culture, language, viability of attending conferences, etc. SRNT's focus on building capacity through dissemination of the science to LMIC researchers is of greater benefit than focusing on getting researchers from LMICs to join the Society.

Guiding Principle 2: LMICs and Building Capacity

It is generally accepted that differences in funding levels of research by country result in dissimilar levels of research undertaken across the globe. As a result, researchers in lower- and middle-income countries may require a greater level of support than researchers in higher-income countries. Always bearing in mind the Society's financial and volunteer resources, SRNT is committed to addressing the very real need for capacity building in LMICs.

Boundary Standard 2A: Researchers are SRNT's Priority

While there are many needs in the broader treatment and tobacco control communities, SRNT's priority is nicotine/tobacco researchers. Through SRNT University, SRNT will provide resources to help non-researchers understand research fundamentals, access and understand scientific literature, and incorporate research into their workplace. SRNT University may expand to include training specifically for people working in cessation and tobacco control.

As part of the 2020 LMIC needs assessment survey, non-research professionals will be asked about how the research community can better support their work in adjacent communities.

Boundary Standard 2B: Fostering Capacity Building

The Global Research Network is SRNT's primary arm for outreach to researchers working in LMICs. It fosters capacity building through proactive involvement in regional meetings/events; working with the leadership of SRNT University to develop capacity-building educational modules; and linking LMIC researchers with training, networking, and other opportunities.

Boundary Standard 2C: Undertaking New Activities

The cost and sustainability of new programs, as well as barriers to accessibility and success, must be considered before any action is undertaken. SRNT should not start projects or programs that do not have local interest/support, a plan for financial sustainability, or regional partners/volunteers that will help with implementation and oversight.

The SRNT Board will periodically review the multiple barriers in engaging LMIC researchers, including the cost of membership, the visibility and perception(s) of SRNT, language barriers, lack of funds to attend the SRNT Annual Meeting, and barriers to meaningful participation in Networks.

Boundary Standard 2D: Extending SRNT's Reach

The Board must rely on non-dues external funding, partnerships, and other creative solutions when considering new programs to build LMIC research capacity. Whenever possible, SRNT will rely on the SRNT University platform or other centralized information resources to provide no-cost education, as well as capacity building activities for researchers working in lower- and middle-income countries.

Rationale

SRNT has long had the goal of increasing its global presence, and the Membership Survey showed significant support for a continued focus on LMICs and research capacity building. However, members were not in favor of paying higher dues to expand current efforts. Therefore, the Board must be creative in funding and use of centralized, web-based programming to address this goal without raising dues for members in high-income countries.

Guiding Principle 3: Ability to Impact Global Policy

SRNT recognizes the value of partnering with adjacent communities (e.g., public policy groups and NGOs working to impact policies, regulations, and/or legislation) in LMICs. SRNT will support groups working to enact, implement, and defend evidence-based policies, regulations, and laws, as financial and volunteer resources, and member engagement allow.

Boundary Standard 3A: Taking Action

SRNT may take action in countries/ regions where SRNT members reside or work based on a specific request or identified need; availability and interest of partner organizations; and the level of volunteer, financial, and staff resources necessary to make a measurable impact.

Boundary Standard 3B: Commenting on International Legislation

SRNT will consider endorsing or commenting on legislative and regulatory questions in any country, provided SRNT is made aware of a local need in a timely manner (See Purpose & Role Guiding Principle 5A: Advocacy, Allies, and the Field). Local members or other concerned researchers or advocates may engage the Global Research Network or SRNT's Nicotine Policy Action Committee to request support in identifying the appropriate scientific response when legislative or regulatory issues arise.

Boundary Standard 3C: Reliance on SRNT Members for Action

SRNT members must take the lead on initiating large-scale regional projects such as conferences, creating networking groups, or starting a new Chapter. Such activities are unlikely to succeed if they are implemented with a top-down approach, and without local support, such endeavors are unlikely to be sustainable. SRNT will not undertake new programs or activities in countries without members who work or reside in-country unless there is a very specific reason that would benefit SRNT or the nicotine/ tobacco research community.

Boundary Standard 3D: Centralized, Customizable Resources

As a society that relies heavily on its volunteers in order to have a local impact, SRNT will support researchers and, to a lesser extent, professionals working in adjacent fields, by providing a centralized repository of resources including customizable templates, educational programming, and other tools and resources that support local dissemination and other efforts.

Rationale

SRNT has limited financial and volunteer resources. And, as learned from the Membership Survey and articulated in the Purpose and Role document, SRNT's role is to work with adjacent communities and organizations rather than take on advocacy initiatives on its own. The Work Advisory Group identified SRNT's role as providing resources and information in support of LMIC policy activities, rather than taking on those activities as a Society.

Guiding Principle 4: SRNT Chapters

The role of Chapters as an extension of the Society in specific geographic regions is a critical subject which has not been addressed formally since 2010. Since that time, the European Chapter has grown and a new Chapter, SRNT Oceania, has been created. The SRNT Board will appoint a task force to address and document the role of Chapters and the relationship between SRNT and Chapters as part of Phase II of SRNT 2025. The Guiding Principles and Boundary Standards relating to SRNT Chapters will be developed at that time.

Section 3: Phase II and Implementation of SRNT 2025

Next Steps

1. Launch and analyze results of an LMIC Survey, with the intent to address recommendations made by the Global Presence WAG from Meeting 2, specifically:
 - a. To consider resources necessary to disseminate the science specifically in LMICs;
 - b. To consider best methods for supporting the development of member researchers in LMICs based on SRNT capacity;
 - c. To consider best methods for proactively reaching out to and communicating with researchers in LMICs to periodically collect information on needs and issues; and
 - d. To consider methods for exporting scientific knowledge from more established countries to LMICs.
2. Create a Board-appointed Task Force to:
 - a. Address and document the role of Chapters and the relationship between SRNT and Chapters.
 - b. Develop the Guiding Principles and Boundary Standards relating to SRNT Chapters.
3. Global Research Network Project:
 - a. Develop a list of different topics (e.g., taxation impact on smoking rates) and develop templates that outline the evidence for use by researchers in LMICs.
 - b. Explore the feasibility of SRNT providing materials in multiple languages (e.g., French and Spanish).

Section 4: Final Recommendations

Recommendations to the Board

Recommendation 1:

With changes noted as a result of Meeting 3, the Global Presence Work Advisory Group recommends adoption of the Global Presence Guiding Principles and Boundary Standards as written.

Recommendation 2:

The Global Presence WAG recommends adoption of the tasks cited for the Implementation Phase.