

The Vienna School of Clinical Research (VSCR)

I need to share my experience of the above institution, which was introduced to me coincidentally during discussions with an official from a pharmaceutical company. I was offered a brochure of the School, visited its website, and the rest is history.

The VSCR, based in Vienna, Austria, is a non-profit educational organization dedicated to improve clinical research and the application of its outcomes to evidence-based health care. The School achieves this by offering continuing education to professionals and clinicians to ensure high scientific standards in the generation and interpretation of clinical trial data and their application to clinical practice. It offers scholarships to applicants from developing countries on a merit basis. These are sponsored by the city of Vienna, the Austrian Ministry of Education, Science and Culture as well as by other public and private organizations.

The School has fully-based its activities on academic grounds. Close partnerships have been established with a number of renowned universities in Europe, the Middle East, Africa and the Americas.

The educational programme consists of a range of courses, workshop and therapeutic area seminars tailored to physicians/investigators and other hospital- and industry-based personnel involved in clinical research. They range from 3 – 6 days in length, end with a multiple-choice examination and are acknowledged within national and international programmes for continuing education. Though all the courses can be booked individually, completing a predeter-

mined number of courses and workshops can lead to the acquisition of a VSCR diploma (basic and advanced level) for certification of special experience in clinical research.

The School does have an admission criteria, a limit to the numbers admitted per module, selection criteria for scholarships, and accreditation processes. More information is available on the School's website: www.vscr.at.

I have been fortunate to receive a scholarship from the School to do some courses in 2004/2005. I am following the Health Outcomes Research stream, and have so far done 2 of the 3 Modules required for the basic diploma. The last Module is coming up next September. I felt unfairly privileged when I realized I was not only the only African by race, but also the only delegate from the African continent. When I raised this concern I learned to my amazement that the School has not had applications from the African continent. Now judging from the number of clinical trials being done in this country, let alone the continent, I feel a responsibility to popularize this resource, which I think a lot of professionals in this country should benefit from.

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