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Office of
Research Integrity and Assurance

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News from the Cornell University IRB office
March 2012

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Collaborating with Researchers at Other Institutions

If you are collaborating with another institution(s) on a project involving human participant research and wish to avoid duplicate IRB review, an Inter-Institutional Authorization Agreement may be arranged to establish one institution's IRB as the designated IRB to review and approve the research. Authorization Agreements need to be negotiated at each institution, usually on a case-by-case basis. Please contact Susan Lewis, IRB Administrator, at sl346@cornell.edu or 607-255-5138 to discuss the conditions under which an Inter-Institutional Authorization Agreement may be an option for your project.

Avoid Common Mistakes When Using Email for Research with Human Participants

Increasingly, researchers are using email to organize and manage their research activities. Email helps with study advertising and recruitment, coordinating study enrollment and participation schedules, conducting surveys and interviews, following up with participants for longitudinal research, and many other tasks. However, the use of email has led to inadvertent disclosure of participant information to others, in violation of the confidentiality usually promised to participants.

Important tip: Double-check your emails to future or current research participants to make sure that you are using **the Bcc feature when sending out messages to multiple recipients**. Using the Bcc feature allows you to send an email to a list of recipients without disclosing anyone's name or email address to other recipients.

If a breach in confidentiality does occur for any reason, please notify the IRB office via an unexpected event report (www.irb.cornell.edu/forms) so we can work with you to determine an appropriate follow-up course of action.

Amendment Requirements – Changes to Research Protocols

As a reminder to investigators, all changes to human participant research protocols, whether IRB-approved or exempt from IRB review, must be submitted for review and approval prior to implementing the change(s) into the research study. Please visit the FAQs page on the IRB website (www.irb.cornell.edu/faq) for further information on amendment requirements. To request approval for changes to a protocol, investigators must use an Amendment Request form (www.irb.cornell.edu/forms) and send it to irbhp-amendments@cornell.edu.

Using the IRB's Informed Consent Form Templates

Investigators and research personnel are encouraged to use the informed consent templates on the IRB website (www.irb.cornell.edu/forms) when developing or revising research consent materials. Using the templates helps to ensure that you have the IRB's most current guidance related to describing your research, as well as current information to cover administrative matters, such as contact information for the IRB office and the EthicsPoint hotline (www.hotline.cornell.edu). Use of the templates can also help avoid delays in the review process by minimizing request to update consent materials.

Please note that the consent templates contain instructions (*in red, italicized font*) under each of the headings. It is the IRB's expectation that these instructions will be deleted, and that the font will be changed to a standard color/format, as the templates are revised for use with your research.

NIH Genetic Educational Program for Social/Behavioral Science Researchers

The National Institutes of Health (NIH) has launched a new genetics educational program (http://www.nchpeg.org/bssr/) designed to provide sufficient genetics background to social and behavioral scientists to allow them to engage effectively in interdisciplinary research with genetics researchers.

The program offers information in several core topics – variation (e.g., sources of genetic variation, biological pathways); gene-environment interaction; population issues; clinical issues (e.g., family history) and research issues (e.g., data sharing) – and was developed to be applicable for most scientists in a broad range of research areas, including addiction, psychiatry, anthropology, obesity, clinical genetics, and race and ethnicity.

Particularly useful information, from an IRB-related perspective, can be found via the "tag cloud" section on the program's main page. Topics include informed consent, data sharing, privacy, study designs, methodology, and many others.

If you have any questions or comments regarding these or any other topics relevant to the IRB, please contact Matthew Aldridge (ma354@cornell.edu) or Susan Lewis (irbhp@cornell.edu) for assistance. Please visit the IRB website for updates and other information pertinent to conducting research with human participants at Cornell University.