

NOTES

REB Dialogue on Research Ethics: Student Research

Oct. 17, 2007, 1-2:30 pm

Kwantlen University College - Conference Center G1205

Interim REB: Warren Bourgeois, Farhad Dastur (Chair), Steve Dooley, Peter Graf, Sam Migliore, Arleigh Reichl, Jan Storch

Note Taker: Leslee Birch

Welcome

Farhad Dastur welcomed the attendees to the first dialogue on research ethics (student research) presented by the board.

Participants were reminded that anyone may attend the open session parts of the monthly REB meetings for the Fall, 2007 semester.

Introduction

The board members introduced themselves to the participants highlighting their ethics and research expertise.

Agenda

The focus of this session is on student research at Kwantlen which is estimated to be a significant amount of the research carried on at the institution.

To respect the Tri-Council Policy on Human Participants, the Board asked for suggestions on effective ways to inform REB of individual student research and student research a part of a course. Although the REB should be aware of all the research, only the projects deemed a concern will be submitted to the board for review.

In the context of Research Ethics, student research at Kwantlen means several things:

- Students as research subjects in an investigator's project
- Students conducting their own research as part of a course requirement
- Students as research subjects as part of a course or institutional review or for strictly pedagogical purposes.
- Students as research subjects for strictly pedagogical purposes.

How do we handle students as research participants, especially those factors that may overly influence their assessment of the pros and cons of participation? Examples of such factors include trust in the researcher, lack of knowledge about research, and participation inducements such as grades or money.

There was some discussion about standard protocols used at other institutions such as SFU and UVIC

Students as Researchers in a Course

How do we give ethics approval to research that is conducted as part of a course requirement?

TCPS: As a special exception to Article 1.4(a), an institution may decide that ethics review of research that is carried out by undergraduate students as part of their course work may be delegated to a departmental level process that complies with this Policy Statement. The institution should set out criteria for determining which categories of research proposal are suitable for consideration through this means, and establish such procedural issues as to who will be responsible for implementing and overseeing the approval mechanisms. As with other levels of review proper accountability demands appropriate record keeping. Departmental level review should not be used for research in which an undergraduate student is carrying out research that is part of a faculty member's own research program. Such research should be reviewed by the regular institutional REB procedures.

Students assessed as part of an institutional performance review

Article 1.1(d) of the TCPS indicates that studies related directly to assessing the performance of an organization within the mandate of the organization need not be subject to REB review.

However, performance reviews that contain an element of research in addition to assessment may need ethics review.

What are the consequences of an ethics violation that the instructor had approved? Who is responsible?

An adverse event needs to be reported (esp. in medical research)

Idea: include a Complaint form on the web that participants can fill out

We need processes in place that can mitigate problems

What can the REB do to a researcher who didn't obtain approval?

A: we would tell them to stop or submit their project for approval

Journals and reviewers can ask if a project rec'd approval

What about research involving email? Or telephone?

How is surveillance maintained?

We need a culture of ethics in our research community; there is always some slippage; this happens

Feedback and Suggestions

Course outline could have an additional check box indicating student research. Once checked, the outline would be forwarded to the REB for approval.

Educating the students on the requirements for Ethics Review:

One instructor's practice:

- Students are instructed to take the two hour TCPS on Ethics tutorial and print the certificate upon completion
- Students are then required to complete the ethics application form and send to the instructor who simulates the REB.

What is the responsibility of the instructor in the case of student research and how is she/he to judge what is minimal risk to the participant?

- TCPS specifies risks
- How is the instructor ensuring minimal risk?
- REB acts as a resource to the instructor
- The community of scholars have the responsibility to teach research ethics.

Participant recruitment:

- Advertising must state REB approval
- Telephone/e-mail solicitation is generally not approved according to KUC's Ethics Policy and should be reported to the supervising faculty member
- Research pools offering additional credits or other alternatives for participation
- Many pool participants become involved in research work that can positively influence their learning

Participant resources:

- On line comment form
- Mechanism to communicate results of research

A concern was raised about a Kwantlen faculty member who participated in research that did not undergo normal Ethics review. Discussion ensued:

- What is the responsibility of a researcher acting as a consultant for participatory action research that is initiated and funded by outside groups?
- REBs across the country have struggled with the issues presented by participatory action research and the complexities of "research ownership"
- How are we protecting those involved, especially vulnerable subjects?
- It is important to identify past errors and policy weaknesses in order to learn from them and improve policies, procedures, and practices.

Future

Suggestion: Workshop on Minimum Risk hosted by the REB

Discussion about Participant Pools

Alternative options for students: research "walk through," or simulations

Demystification of research is important

The meeting was adjourned at 2:30 pm.