The NUS-IRB hopes to keep our researchers updated on the latest ethical issues and problems occurring around the world. This will help us keep abreast of international best practices to ensure that research done in Singapore will be well accepted, scientifically and ethically. These news alerts will be issued as and when incidents are reported.

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In This Issue

1. IRB's Human Research Ethics Consultation Services

NUS-Institutional Review Board's Human Research Ethics Consultation (IRB REC) Services

a) What is Human Research Ethics Consultation?

Human Research Ethics Consultation (REC) involves collaboration and discussion between Principal Investigators (PI), research assistants and students and the NUS-IRB administrators and/or Chairman in the design and implementation of a research project that may pose research ethics and administrative issues before the PI submits an IRB application.

b) How does Human Research Ethics Consultation differ from the Institutional Review Board Process?

The REC serves to supplement the IRB when the investigators request a consultation about a specific issue(s) on their projects before they submit an IRB application, e.g., informed consent, recruitment procedures, compensation and reimbursement.

The focus is mainly educational – to help a new PI by identifying problems before the study begins or the issues become serious or widespread.

c) Who may call for a REC?

Any investigator may request for an REC at any stage in the protocol design. The Institutional Review Board or its administrators may also suggest that an investigator call for an REC if the ethical issues are particularly complex.

d) Why is an REC needed?

Our Human Protection program seeks to promote an environment that encourages critical reflection on all aspects of research by helping to address ethical concerns, identify ethical problems and offer advice by modifying research design accordingly.

Research ethics consultation should be regarded as an enhancement to protocol development and not as an obstacle. Consultations may result in modifications of study design, research procedures, consent forms, in relation to grant applications, publications, and
institutional policies. The Research Ethics Consultation Program does not replace an Institutional Review Board. It is a way to add a non-regulatory element to the research process.

**e) How do I request for an REC?**

The Research Ethics Consultation service is led by Mr Chan Tuck Wai and Ms Tan Hui Cheng of the NUS-Institutional Review Board. Consults can be requested by contacting Ms Annie Koh at 6516 4311 or by email: irb@nus.edu.sg. There is no charge for the consultation for NUS staff. Appointments are usually available every Wednesday afternoons.

Please contact the IRB Secretariat at 6516 4311 or 6516 7359 or email at irb@nus.edu.sg if you require further assistance or information.

**About NUS-IRB**

NUS Institutional Review Board (NUS-IRB) was established on 1st September 2003. This Board (also referred to as the Research Ethics Committee in some countries) will review, approve and monitor the ethical aspects of all NUS research projects that involve human subjects and human tissues/cells/data. Its main objective is to protect the rights and welfare of human research subjects in research activities conducted by NUS staff, researchers and students.