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.

In This Issue

1. Revisions to E-Declaration Guidelines and Form for Commercially Available Human Biological Materials & Cell Lines

With the implementation of the prohibitions against commercial trading of human tissues under the Human Biomedical Research Act 2015 (HBRA) (sections 32 and 33) on 1 Jan 2017, the NUS-IRB has revised the corresponding E-Declaration Guidelines and Form.

Researchers who had previously made arrangements to obtain and/or supply human biological materials for use in research should ensure that their arrangements are not in contravention of the prohibitions in the HBRA.

Please refer to the revised Guidelines and Form on the IRB’s website at www.nus.edu.sg/irb for details.

E-Declaration Guidelines: NUS-IRB-GUIDE-H01
E-Declaration Form: IRB-FORM-H01

2. Northumbria University (UK) fined for life-threatening research on students

Northumbria University was fined £400,000 for a life-threatening research study to measure the effect of caffeine on exercise in healthy volunteers.

The near-fatal incident with no proper risk assessment, occurred in March 2015 after two healthy sports science male students were each given the equivalent of 300 cups of coffee.

Investigations also revealed a catalogue of errors (including a grave calculation error i.e. 100 times the correct dosage and a switch from using caffeine tablets to powder) by researchers and their untrained

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assistants that resulted in both being kept in intensive care for several days.

All researchers are reminded to ensure there is proper risk assessment, provide vital supervision and adequate training of their research staff when conducting experiments on human subjects.

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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.

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