

Research Ethics Board Annual Report to the BCIT Board of Governors (2017)

Introduction

BCIT's Research Ethics Board (REB) operates under BCIT Policy 6500.^(1,2) All research projects involving human participants or human biological materials undertaken by members of the BCIT community fall within the jurisdiction of the BCIT REB. Projects conducted by researchers from outside the BCIT community who access Institute resources (equipment, facilities, personnel, or participants) also fall within the jurisdiction of the BCIT REB when those projects involve human participants or human biological materials. The REB reports directly to the Board of Governors and is administratively responsible to the Vice President, Academic.

In carrying out its responsibility to review and approve research projects, the REB ensures that research involving human participants under the auspices of BCIT is done with due regard for ethical principles. BCIT's REB adheres to the principles set out in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS) which sets the national standards that are followed across Canada. REB members are aware that research done under the auspices of BCIT carries an implied liability, and must therefore meet the highest ethical standards.

Besides protecting the interests of human participants, REB review enables BCIT researchers to maintain their eligibility for national and international research funding. In addition, the REB contributes to education in research ethics for faculty, staff and students.

Reviewing Applications

The BCIT REB reviewed 45 applications in 2017. This represented a 165% increase over our historical (2005-2015) average of 17 applications. Applicants seeking ethics approval completed a comprehensive application form⁽³⁾ and submitted all relevant supporting documentation.

The review process involved first determining whether the project was "minimal risk." To be deemed minimal risk the project exposed the participants to no greater harm than they would normally encounter in their daily lives. Projects that exceeded minimal risk were reviewed by the full REB, whereas minimal risk projects were reviewed by a delegated review panel of two REB members. 44 of the clinical and behavioural applications reviewed in 2017 were deemed to be of minimal risk by the Chair in consultation with the board and other REBs. One clinical application on infants was deemed "above minimal risk" and was reviewed by the full board. All other student minimal-risk projects were circulated to the full REB for feedback.

Following REB review, applicants were informed of any revisions required, once revisions were made, projects were approved for a period of one year. In total 39/45 (87%) studies were approved. Of the six

remaining studies that were not approved in 2017, four were redesigned to be exempt from review (no human participants), and two studies are pending revisions as of March 2018.

In 2017, 40/45 (89%) of the applicants were from BCIT. BCIT applicants were members of faculty conducting research, students, faculty and staff working towards postgraduate degrees at other institutions, and researchers in Applied Research conducting contract research projects for external clients. The remaining five outside applications came from researchers completing graduate work at other institutions, those conducting research involving students or faculty as participants, and those collaborating with BCIT faculty and staff.

The large (165%) increase in applications this year came from a mix of faculty and students with faculty submitting 39% of the total increase, and students, 61% of the increase. The two student groups submitting studies were Prosthetics and Orthotics, who have projects every other year (5 submitted in 2017), and Forensics, who have student projects every year (12 submitted in 2017).

Other business

Approximately 67 requests were received for information on REB application, including meetings with prospective applicants. Nine applications were renewed or amended. The approval of one 2016 study temporarily suspended pending review of privacy measures was cleared for continuation in 2017.

Reviewing REB Policy and Procedures

Policy 6500 and procedures^(1,2) were reviewed in 2017 to include wording for future harmonization of multi-jurisdiction ethics review, to comply with changes in TCPS, and reporting requirements of funding agencies.⁽⁴⁾ Those revisions will be submitted to the Board of Governors in 2018. Storage of all records and applications continues on SharePoint. Records previous to 2016 are archived in paper form following BCIT records management policy and procedure (Policy 6701).

Continuing education

To keep the board's knowledge of privacy and research ethics current, one or more board members are given the opportunity to attend national or regional ethics meetings and report back to the board. This year, three members attended a meeting of regional ethics boards (REB West), organized jointly by UBC and SFU.

REB Membership

The members of the REB at the close of 2017 were: Meena Amlani (Faculty, Medical Radiography Technology), Francine Anselmo (Faculty, Medical Radiography Technology), Ron Correll (Member knowledgeable in law; Instructor, Department of Business Administration), Michael Bourke (Member knowledgeable in ethics; Program Head, Liberal Studies), Glynda Doyle (Instructor, Bachelor of Science Nursing Program), Funda Isbuga Erel (Research and Information Analyst, Institutional Planning &

Analysis), Roger Gale (Instructor, Computer Information Systems Administration), Katherine Golder (Instructor, Communication), Stefan Joseph (Project Leader, Applied Research Liaison Office), Allison Kirschenmann (Instructor, Basic Health Sciences), and Hal Weinberg (External member; Professor Emeritus, Simon Fraser University). The board is supported by Jenna Clews, ARLO-Administrative Assistant Liaison Office/REB administrator.

The board lost four members in 2017 to medical leave and resignation with one new member added to replace a lost member. We are actively recruiting new members as needed to meet the increasing workload of the board.

The REB meets regularly every second month. Minutes of the meetings are kept.

Signed

Allison Kirschenmann
BCIT REB Chair

References

- (1) <http://www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/6500.pdf>
- (2) https://www.bcit.ca/files/pdf/policies/6500_pr1.pdf
- (3) <https://www.bcit.ca/appliedresearch/ethics/>
- (4) <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/Default/>