

Ethics

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In the first instance, common sense is the best guide to whether or not a study is ethical. It is still important to seek advice from an independent research ethics committee whenever research is contemplated. In the UK the requirement is that an NHS Research Ethics Committee (NHS REC) provides an independent ethical review of all health and social care research if it involves patients and/or carers. The Governance arrangements for Research Ethics Committees (GafREC) provides detailed guidance about NHS REC review requirements. The application for NHS REC review is made using the Integrated Research Application System (IRAS). IRAS enables entry of information about the project once, instead of duplicating information in separate application forms for regulators. If the study does not require review by an NHS REC, the need for an independent ethical review should still be considered. Universities have developed their own ethical review infrastructure and this will be institute specific and location specific. For collaborative research, local ethical review should be obtained where possible, and developing a local ethics infrastructure should be considered if it does not already exist. Duplication of ethical review should be avoided. Ethics committee forms may seem long and detailed, but it is important that these are filled in correctly as this helps to. All dealings with ethics committees should be intelligent and courteous. It is important to attend the meeting at which the study will be discussed, if invited, as it provides a forum for direct communication in relation to the study. It can save time as possible concerns of the ethics committee can be addressed at the time, avoiding lengthy correspondence. Ethics

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