

Committees

The Institute's Human Research Ethics Committee

The Institute's Ethics Committee (HREC) considers the ethical implications of all proposed research projects involving human subjects or human tissue, to determine whether or not the projects are acceptable on scientific and ethical grounds, in accordance with the NHMRC National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Research Involving Humans. Many of the Institute's research projects extend over many years, as they try and tackle complex research questions.

During the 2004/2005 year:

38 projects came before the Committee for consideration, of which 2 new projects & 5 new project collaborations were approved; 31 ongoing projects were reviewed in accordance with the NHMRC and NIH guidelines for monitoring projects. The Committee also considers and records project collaborations involving WEHI clinical researchers where primary responsibility is with the Melbourne Health HREC due to the projects being of a clinical or drug trial nature.

The Committee implemented a new, simplified, streamlined application process that involves scientists writing a short letter to the committee explaining their project and any ethical issues it involves. The objective of the new process was to move away from what most scientists experience as a burdensome bureaucratic process to one that better supports scientists' own ethical practices and reflection. The Committee shall gauge the success of the new application process and refine when deemed necessary.

Members of the Committee participated in the review of the National Guidelines, currently being undertaken by the NHMRC. A particular focus in this review is to minimise

the number of ethics reviews currently required in multi-institutional projects.

This year researchers who have NIH projects are required to complete an on-line questionnaire, to determine their knowledge of ethical principles and standards. The WEHI Committee is registered in the US as an Institutional Review Board (IRB) in compliance with US standards.

Membership of the Committee saw several changes during this period. Ms Jacqueline Satchell left the Committee in January 2005. We welcomed Ms Catherine Walter AM, on to Committee as the Board of WEHI's representative in July 2004. We also welcomed Dr Benjamin Kile back on to the Committee in March 2005. Ben is a member of the Cancer and Haematology Division, who returned after completing his postdoctoral appointment at Baylor College of Medicine, Houston, USA.



*Reverend Dr. Rufus Black, Chair
Human Research Ethics Committee*

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