



Research Ethics Board

Terms of Reference

April 17, 2024

Original Terms of Reference: Approved March 2008

Version #2: Approved February 2010

Version #3: Approved September 21, 2011

Version #4: Approved June 17, 2015

Version #5: Approved September 18, 2019

Version #6: Approved March 17, 2021

Version #7: Approved December 15, 2021

Version #8: Approved March 16, 2022

Version #9: Approved November 15, 2023

Version #10: Approved April 17, 2024

Prepared by

Research Ethics Board

St. Joseph's Care Group

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Terms of Reference

The Research Ethics Board (REB) at St. Joseph's Care Group (SJCG) ensures that all research at SJCG meets the highest ethical standards. At a minimum the REB is guided by the:

- *Mission, Vision and Values of St. Joseph's Care Group,*
- *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans,*
- *Healthcare Ethics Guide by the Catholic Health Alliance of Canada, and*
- *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004, S.O. 2004, c. 3, Sched. A.*

AUTHORITY

The REB has the authority and responsibility to approve, disapprove, propose modifications to, suspend, or terminate ongoing research involving human participants being carried out within or on behalf of SJCG. The REB also has authority over investigators from other institutions who wish to carry out research on SJCG premises or with SJCG clients or staff.

In order for the REB to perform its duties properly and maintain high ethical standards, it is an administratively independent body that operates at arm's length from administrative, governance, programmatic, and research structures within SJCG. While autonomous in its decision making role, the REB is responsible and accountable to the Board of Directors (Board). The Board retains the authority to deny the initiation of REB-approved research protocols for reasons other than research ethics to ensure that all projects and protocols are in accordance with the current ethical and social teachings of the Catholic Church.

All REB decisions are reported to the Board for information. The reporting process is approved by the Board. Summary reports of REB activity are provided to the Board on a quarterly basis and a year-end report is provided to the Board for inclusion in the Annual Meeting of the Board of Directors.

MEMBERSHIP

The REB consists of a minimum of seven voting members, both men and women, including:

- at least two members with broad expertise in research methodology (one of whom is the Scientific Director at SJCG),
- at least one member knowledgeable in ethics (i.e., the Ethicist at SJCG),
- at least one member knowledgeable in health law,
- at least one Indigenous member knowledgeable about fields of research, disciplines and methodologies that impact Indigenous populations,
- at least one member knowledgeable in privacy issues (i.e., the Privacy Contact at SJCG), and
- at least one community representative not affiliated with SJCG.

The Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services is an ex-officio (non-voting) member of the REB.

Membership should represent the service areas of SJCG (i.e., Addictions & Mental Health, Rehabilitative Care, and Seniors' Health).

The community representative role is at arm's length from SJCG.

APPOINTMENT

Recruitment of REB members is initiated by the Chair and the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services who bring recommendations to the REB to consider. Candidates are nominated by REB and then the appointment is approved by the Board. Members of the REB are typically appointed for a three-year term. Members may seek to serve multiple consecutive terms. In advance of the end of a member's term, the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services & Library ascertains if the member wishes to serve an additional term. Should the member wish to continue, the REB nominates the member for an additional term and the re-appointment is approved by the Board. The Ethicist and Privacy Contact are permanent members of the REB and the positions are filled by the individuals who hold these roles at SJCG. Thus no nomination or approval is required for these members. The Chair of the REB is nominated by the REB membership and approved by the Board. The Chair of the REB should have a minimum of one year experience as an REB member. Normally, the REB Chair is appointed for a minimum of a two-year term, renewable once, or at the discretion of the REB.

It is the responsibility of the Chair to recruit an REB member in good standing with a minimum of one year experience to be appointed as Vice Chair. The role of the Vice Chair is to fulfill the duties of the Chair when the Chair is not available or must declare conflict of interest in reviewing a specific application.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF REB MEMBERS

The responsibilities of members of the REB are to:

- complete the most current version of the Tri-Council Policy Statement Tutorial Course on Research Ethics and provide a copy of the certificate of completion to the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services,
- complete *The Fundamentals of OCAP®* course offered by the First Nations Information Governance Centre and provide a copy of the certificate of completion to the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services
- submit a copy of citizenship documentation to the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services,
- sign a confidentiality agreement,
- read, be familiar with, and follow the Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs) of the REB,
- attend all REB meetings and arrive prepared to discuss agenda items under review,
- complete delegated reviews as requested, and
- join REB sub-committees to participate in working groups as required.

Additional responsibilities of the Chair of the REB are to:

- chair meetings of the REB,
- be available for delegated reviews and consultation regarding REB issues,

- collaborate with the Manager, Volunteers, Library & Research Services & Library on REB activities and documents, and
- monitor the REB's decisions for consistency, ensure that these decisions are recorded properly, and that researchers are given written communication from the REB in a timely fashion.

CONFLICT OF INTEREST

A conflict of interest is defined as “the incompatibility of two or more duties, responsibilities, or interests (personal or professional) of an individual or institution as they relate to the ethical conduct of research, such that one cannot be fulfilled without compromising another”.¹ Members of the REB must disclose real, potential or perceived conflicts of interest to the REB as soon as they are known. The REB reviews the conflict and determines the action necessary. Possible options include, but are not limited to: no action (i.e., conflict is minimal or can be eliminated) or removing the member from responsibilities related to the conflict.

QUORUM

Quorum is defined as a majority (50%+1) of voting members. Quorum must include:

- two members with expertise in research methodology,
- one member knowledgeable in ethics, and
- one member from the community who is not affiliated with SJCG.

For biomedical research quorum must also include one member knowledgeable in the relevant law. Members attending meetings via video or teleconference are included in quorum.

When there are matters that the REB chooses to vote on electronically, there must be quorum for the vote to be carried.

MEETINGS

The REB is scheduled to meet monthly with the exception of July and August. The schedule of regular meetings is provided on the REB website. In exceptional circumstances, the Chair can call additional meetings should the need arise.

APPEAL PROCESS

Principal Investigators (PI) can request reconsideration of REB decisions in accordance with the SOPs. These requests must be made in writing to the REB Chair within 15 business days of the decision being sent to the PI, and must contain the reason(s) for the appeal. The REB can confirm or revise the original decision. Should the PI disagree with the outcome of the reconsideration, the PI can request a review by the REB's board of appeal. The REB of appeal is the Thunder Bay Regional Health Sciences Centre Research Ethics Board. This information is conveyed to the researcher when an application is rejected.

¹ Government of Canada – Panel on Research Ethics. Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans 2014 – Glossary. (2016, June 10). Retrieved from <http://www.pre.ethics.gc.ca/eng/policy-politique/initiatives/tcps2-eptc2/glossary-glossaire/#tphp>

*Care
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