



Margaret Szalay  
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Spit Junction NSW 2068

7<sup>th</sup> April 2009

Dear Margaret

On behalf of the Australian Society for Medical Research (ASMR), we welcome the opportunity to be involved in the evaluation of the new single system for ethical review of multi-centre research proposals. As the peak professional society representing health and medical researchers in Australia, ASMR has a keen interest in the implementation of processes that facilitate the effective and thorough review of such proposals in a timely manner.

We have provided more specific details under the areas specified in your invitation:

- Efficiency - little improvement under the new system. The National Ethics Application Form (NEAF) is still convoluted and repetitive and appears to have been designed for clinical trials rather than more laboratory-based research. The format is cumbersome in that it does not readily allow more than 2 people to work on the proposal. Often more than 3 people are required to complete an ethical proposal due to different areas of expertise.
- Effectiveness – see above.
- Timeliness – Approval is still required for site-specific applications often resulting in twice the workload. The entire process is extremely time consuming and can take at least 8 months to get one application through. This is not always workable for grant-funded projects with restricted time lines for completion.
- Cost effectiveness – while the form is completed electronically, 15 hard copies are still required to be sent to the ethics committees.
- Workload – this has greatly increased and now requires a full time person to complete the process (also impacting on cost effectiveness above).
- Other relevant issues - There appears to be very little corporate knowledge of the system at NSW Department of Health and the text support is also not user friendly making working through the process challenging.

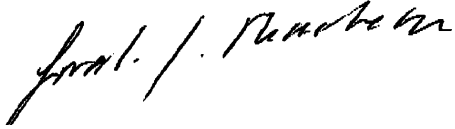
There is differing support for the new scheme amongst some Human Research Ethic Committees (HRECs) for example, some are not happy with one lead HREC's decision replacing their ability to undertake their own independent reviews and request changes to consent forms after the lead HREC has approved them.

The governance component does not cover independent research institutes or universities - just institutes or hospitals that fall within the NSW Health's jurisdiction.

The incompatibility of the new system for researchers outside of NSW makes it extremely challenging for inter-state collaborations.

We hope that these comments will be of use in the evaluation process. Please do not hesitate to contact us if you require further clarification on any of the points we have raised.

Yours sincerely,



Sarah Meachem, PhD  
President, ASMR



Alison J. Butt, PhD  
President-Elect, ASMR