A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO RESEARCH ETHICS IN CANADA
What determines ethical conduct for research involving humans in Canada?

TCPS2 (Tri-Council Policy Statement): Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans

The TCPS2 is the benchmark for the ethical conduct of research involving humans in Canada. All Canadian institutions and researchers must adhere to the TCPS2 as a condition of funding.

Core Principle 1: Respect for Persons
Respect for persons refers to the intrinsic value of human beings and the respect and consideration they are due. Researchers must adhere to the dual moral obligations to respect autonomy and to protect those with developing, impaired or diminished autonomy. (Consent and Capacity)

Core Principle 2: Concern for Welfare
The welfare of a person is the quality of that person’s experience of life in all aspects. Researchers and Research Ethics Boards should aim to protect the welfare of participants, and, in some circumstances, to promote that welfare in view of any foreseeable risks associated with the research. (Risks, Privacy and Confidentiality)

Core Principle 3: Justice
Justice refers to the obligation to treat people fairly and equitably. People or groups whose circumstances cause them to be vulnerable or marginalized may need to be afforded special attention to be treated justly in research. (Equity and Vulnerability)

KEY ELEMENTS OF A RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

Consent Process
- Free, informed and ongoing consent
- Disclosure of risks and benefits
- Power dynamics and conflicts of interest

Research Methodology
- Appropriate and justified inclusion and exclusion criteria
- Sampling techniques
- Power analyses

Research Conduct
- Welfare
- Autonomy
- Right to withdraw
- Justice

Confidentiality
- Anonymity and Privacy
- Safety
- Data handling, access, storage and retention

TIMELINE OF RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW

- Project planning and research design
- Research personnel training in relevant policies e.g., TCPS2, Good Clinical Practices, additional Standard Operating Procedures as required by institution, etc.
- Request for review of protocol by all applicable Research Ethics Boards (REBs)
- Ethics review by REB(s)
- Revision of study protocol as per REB recommendations
- REB approval granted
- Research begins
- Reporting of adverse events and requests for protocol changes to REB as needed (ongoing)
- Submission of Continuing Ethics Review to REB as per institutional policies
- End of Study report to REB at conclusion of study, as per institutional policies

Who can I ask for more information?
- Your Principal Investigator
- Your institution’s Research Ethics Office
- The CFMS and its Research Team


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