

Protecting human research participants

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Perhaps the most important parts of the human protection course is the chronological development of ethics in human research. From the Nazi war prisoners, Tuskegee syphilis among others poses an important aspect of the need to protect human subjects. The development of informed consent as part of protecting these participants from the cruelty of some unethical research in the past informs the need to adhere to the consent and the three principles of beneficence, justice and respect. Lack of a principle-driven research can be harmful, deadly and immoral. However, with the set code of conduct in human research through Ethics Review Boards, it is evident that modern research embraces minimum protection.

My workplace, Larkin Hospital in Miami Florida, we carry out human subject research in areas of orthopedic, neuroscience and psychiatric-related studies. Within these research areas, there is a robust Research Ethics Review Board (ERB). The team is tasked with approving research proposals in line with National Institute of Health (NIH) requirement (NIH Office of Extramural Research, 2010). It is a multi-disciplinary body made up of four members including a doctor, pharmacist, nurse, and case manager. Together, they review aspect of the proposal and ensure that they provide minimum protection under the ethical principles laid down in Belmont Report.

In line with ERBs requirements, this body meet the minimum requirements as stipulated in the NIH provisions. Three aspects of their ethics works prove that they are in line with requirements. Firstly, these members are from

medical professionals, thus knowledgeable in health and health research. They also meet twice every week to review proposals; the frequent meeting is an important part of work that all ERBs should meet. Lastly, this ERB has members with a myriad experience in health research. Thus, they are not only relevant but also possess cumulative years of experience that will help them in critical decisions.

References

NIH Office of Extramural Research. (2010). Protection of Human Research Participants.