

[Subscribe](#)

[Past Issues](#)

[Translate](#)

Research Ethics | February 2018

[View this email in your browser](#)



Didn't receive this edition directly? Please visit <https://www.ahrecs.com> and enter your email address in the space provided at the bottom. Our merry extrinsically motivated team will be thrilled.

Disaster Research and its Ethical Review

Disaster research ethics is a growing area of interest within the research ethics field. Given the lack of a universal definition of disasters, it should not be a surprise that disaster research ethics is defined in various ways. Early approaches focused on ethical issues in conducting research in the acute phase of disasters (O'Mathúna 2010). Given the similarities of some of the ethical issues, it came to include humanitarian crises and emergencies. A recent review combined mental health research in natural disasters, armed conflicts and the associated refugee and internally displaced persons (IDP) settings

(Chiumento et al. 2017). Each of these settings raises distinct ethical issues, as well as practical challenges for those ethically reviewing disaster research. The 2016 revision of the Council for International Organizations of Medical Sciences (CIOMS) research ethics guidelines included a section on disaster research (<https://cioms.ch/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/WEB-CIOMS-EthicalGuidelines.pdf>). This blog will highlight a few of the practical challenges and note some efforts to respond to these.

One issue is how some disasters happen suddenly, while research ethics review takes time. The 2016 CIOMS guidelines call for innovative approaches to research ethics review, including ways to pre-assess protocols so that they can be reviewed rapidly once a relevant disaster occurs. As committees develop ways to adapt to disaster research, other review practices can be examined to identify innovative approaches to the challenges.

A key ethical issue to address with disaster research is whether a particular project should be conducted at this time with these particular participants. In the most immediate phase of an acute disaster, resources and energy should be focused on search and rescue. Researchers could hinder this, or divert scarce resources. At the same time, data should be collected as soon as possible to contribute to the evidence based for first responders. Ethics review committees should ensure justifications are provided for why a project needs to be done during the acute phase. Questions also need to be asked about whether disaster survivors have more important needs than to participate in research. For example, some have questioned whether children who survive war should be asked to participate in research when there are few resources available to help them with the mental health challenges of surviving war (Euwema et al. 2008).

With the move towards a more evidence-based approach to humanitarian work, international and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) are increasingly engaging in research and other evaluation programmes. Some of these organisations may have little experience with research or research ethics, and hence need additional support in developing and conducting projects. Much debate has occurred over what 'counts' as research and is therefore required to undergo formal research ethics approval. Rather than asking if a project is research or not, it is more important to identify the ethical issues in the project and ensure they are being addressed as carefully and thoroughly as possible (Chiumento et al. 2017). Needs assessments, projects that monitor or evaluate programmes, public health surveillance, and many other activities raise ethical issues whether or not they are formal academic research studies. At the same time, every project does not need to submit the same sort of detailed research ethics application as a randomised control trial of an experimental drug. Some sort of ethical evaluation should be conducted, and here again there is an opportunity to be innovative. Different formal and informal review mechanisms could be developed to support groups conducting different types of projects. The key concern should be that the ethical issues are being examined and addressed.

[Read more](#)

In 2016, AHRECS developed [material on research ethics and the scholarship of teaching and learning](#) for the Australian government. In our work, we referred to the limited work that had been undertaken in Australia on the ethics of accessing student data. We invited colleagues to respond and are pleased to publish Helen Jones' piece on the subject and to find that ASCILITE are taking a lead on this.

Ethical Use of Student Data in Higher Education - Advancing the conversation

In a 2016 conference paper discussing ethical use of student data I noted that there was a 'disconnect between national and international perspectives of the importance of institutional policy and guidelines regarding ethical use of student data, and the perceptions of academics about these guidelines' (Jones, 2016, p300). I suggested that one strategy for bridging this divide was for conversations to be held both within and between institutions with an aim of informing and enhancing learning and teaching practice and culture. This post provides an overview of some of the conversations that have occurred in this area in the last 12 months in Australasia, particularly through the [Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education](#) (ASCILITE).

First though, my interpretation of the phrase 'ethical use of student data'. To me, and I am sure many others, this is much more than applying for, and being granted, clearance from your institution's Human Research Ethics Committee. Certainly, this is an important step if you are intending to disseminate your findings as research and publish, and is sometimes a step that academic staff can overlook if research in their discipline does not normally involve ethics approval, or they do not consider this as they are not directly researching students, just their data. Ethical use also considers:

- Protection of student privacy
- Conversations with students regarding reasons for collection and use of data
- Ensuring that data is used for informing and enhancing practice and the student experience
- Obtaining consent from students; or, at least, informing students how and why their data will be used

[Read more](#)

You may have missed...

BLOG

(i) [Don't mention the c word: Covert research and the stifling ethics regime in the social](#)

[sciences](#);

(ii) [What's at risk? Who's responsible? Moving beyond the physical, the immediate, the proximate, and the individual](#);

(iii) [Use of Imported Human Biospecimens in Research](#);

(iv) [Magical incantations and the tyranny of the template](#); and

(v) [How can we get mentors and trainees talking about ethical challenges?](#).

RESOURCE LIBRARY

Calls for **expressions of interest**. There are now over a thousand items in the Resource Library (www.ahrecs.com/resources). We're looking for a generous and experienced soul who could help us curate the library. Please send your expression of interest to library@ahrecs.com.

(i) [NHMRC Open Access Policy \(previously also referred to as the NHMRC Policy on the Dissemination of Research Findings\)](#);

(ii) [A paper showing how to make a smallpox cousin just got published. Critics wonder why](#);

(iii) [Rebranding Retractions and the Honest Error Hypothesis](#);

(iv) [A Multi-dimensional Investigation of the Effects of Publication Retraction on Scholarly Impact](#); and

(v) [A Common Standard for Conflict of Interest Disclosure](#).

AHRECS and the ongoing professional development of your research ethics committee

Orientation and the ongoing professional development of all members are essential for the currency of the knowledge of members and the quality of research ethics review at the institution.

In Australia, such orientation and professional development is a requirement of the [National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research](#).

Common reasons for not meeting this requirement are

- Committees are already busy so it is difficult asking members to find yet more time for 'extra' activities; and
- Cost is often raised as a factor.

In recent months AHRECS has been delivering 30-minute in-meeting activities that involve both a pre-recorded audio and a video connection for the discussion component. The cost

of such an activity is AUD800 (exclu GST) and this price includes permission to reuse the audio for 5 years and a work/further reading booklet.

Similar blended activities (including co-presenting with a local member of staff) have been conducted on research integrity, for HDR candidates/supervisors, early career researchers, more experienced researchers, as well as for Research Integrity Advisers and Research Ethics Advisers.

You can this post and earlier posts at www.ahrecs.com/blog



Do you know someone who hasn't subscribed yet to the Research Ethics Monthly? Please encourage them to subscribe now and help us grow this community



Got an idea for a post or a suggestion for a guest?

Send an email to gary@ahrecs.com



Do you have a view, feedback or some constructive criticism on this or other posts? Every item has comment link so you can have your say and continue the conversation.



RESOURCE LIBRARY

Have you checked out the resource library recently? New items are added daily. There are separate sections for Human Research Ethics and Research Integrity. There are subsections for different categories of items e.g. 'In the news' and books.

We hate spam and definitely don't want to be bother you with an wanted emails.
[Click here](#) to change your subscription settings.

This newsletter is authorized by the AHRECS team, [click here](#) for contact and other details.

We would never divulge your details to anyone else, including not disclosing you're a subscriber, without your permission.

This email was sent to <<Email Address>>

[why did I get this?](#) [unsubscribe from this list](#) [update subscription preferences](#)

Australasian Human Research Ethics Consultancy Services (AHRECS) · 14 Sovereign Way · Samford Valley, Qld 4520 · Australia

The MailChimp logo is centered within a grey rounded rectangular box. The text "MailChimp." is written in a white, cursive script font.