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Beneficence as a Principle in Human Research

A Series on the Four Principles of the Australian National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Human Research

In this issue of the *Research Ethics Monthly*, Ian Pieper and Colin Thomson continue their series of short summaries of each of their four co-authored articles on the principles that underpin the Australian National Statement, namely, research merit and integrity, justice, beneficence and respect.

The articles were originally published in the [Monash Bioethics Review](#) and remain available to subscription holders to that journal. The publisher, Springer, has generously agreed to place each of the four articles on Free Access for one month after the corresponding short summary is published in the *Research Ethics Monthly*. Last month they revisited their paper entitled [The value of respect in human research ethics: a conceptual analysis and a practical guide](#). This month they revisit the paper exploring the principle of beneficence in the context of human research. The full paper can be found [here](#).

Beneficence is one of the four values and principles on which the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* (National Statement) is founded. A requirement for beneficence to be demonstrably present in human research is not a uniquely Australian consideration but is found in many of the human research ethics guidance documents from around the world. Beneficence is an important consideration in that it mirrors the altruistic nature of the voluntary nature of participation in human research.

Being a positive virtue, beneficence is a moral ideal and considerations of it as a principle during the design and ethical assessment of a research project can be seen as subjective. This can make beneficence difficult to identify within research proposals. As a principle which promotes good or charitable outcomes, over and above those imposed by duty, it is not merely synonymous with non malfeasance. Beneficence is the provision of benefits over and above the costs associated with the burdens of research.

This paper provides some clarity for researchers and Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) members on the role that beneficence plays in discussions about human research ethics. While applying beneficence in human research does involve consideration of risks and benefits to participants, consideration should also extend to individuals, groups, and communities not directly involved in the research

To accompany this post Ian and Colin have [added an activity sheet](#) to the subscribers' area.

[Read more](#)

Griffith University's implementation of the Australian Code (2018)

IMPLEMENTING THE CODE

This is the first post in the series about institutions implementing the Australian Code (2018). We'd love to hear about your institution's progress and story. Email us at IntegrityStory@ahrecs.com to discuss logistics.

AUSTRALIAN CODE (2007)

At Griffith University, the implementation, operation, investigations and related professional development of/for the 2007 edition of the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research is the responsibility of the Research Ethics & Integrity team in the Office for Research.

The Griffith University Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research was the University's policy implementation of the Australian Code (2007) and it was supplemented by the Research Integrity Resource Sheet (RIRS) series. The Griffith University Code was largely a direct repeat of the Australian Code into Griffith University policy. The RIRS is a series of short (most are four pages) guidance documents that provide practical tips related to the University's implementation of Part A and Part B of Australian Code (2007).

At the outset, Griffith University decided to give its Research Integrity Adviser (RIA) network a more collegiate advisory role, and while RIAs were made available to advise complainants and respondents, or parties in a dispute, their primary role was providing advice and suggestions.

[Read more](#)

Get access to some great resources (two examples included in this post) and support events like the Constructive Voices panels

Every month we add at least two items to [the subscribers' area](#). These includes vignette and other resources to use in your internally delivered professional development workshops. They are shared on a creative commons basis, so a nominated person can download selected material, load it onto a local server and use it within his or her own institution multiple times (as long as they adhere to the CC license). Included here is a example of a discussion item. We are currently working on a library of 26+ research integrity short audio snippets that could be incorporated into your internal research integrity workshops (example also attached). A library of these will be available from the subscribers' area.



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Are you interested in writing an item for the Research Ethics Monthly?

Remember when 2018 was a shiny new thing. Well, we've taken everything that it can dish up and are looking forward to 2019. We want 2019 to be newer and shinier. For those of us at REM, that means we're looking for ideas about how we can do ethics faster, higher, stronger or even just more ethicalier. We'd like to do integrity even more integrityier. We'd settle for humour that is funnier than Gary and Mark's 'Dad jokes'. So, we're asking three things of our readers:

1. Is there something that you'd like to contribute to REM? What is the one thing that is done well in your institution that you think other institutions might really want to know about?
2. Is there someone who has something interesting to say who you can (metaphorically) pin to the wall and encourage to write for REM? We can be 'very persuasive' (metaphorically).
3. Is there a topic that you'd like to see covered by REM?

If so, please enter into negotiations with Gary at REM@ahrecs.com.au. He'll be helpful. He might even tell a Dad joke. Of course, it won't be new, and it won't be shiny.

Publisher

While you are here...

Did you enjoy this edition? Would you like to support the work we do? If so, please consider helping us cover the cost of matters such as hosting the Research Ethics Monthly and other web development by becoming an AHRECS Patron.

In addition to the warm glow from supporting our work, you will be subscribed for monthly updates of useful material (such as resources for use in your local workshops).

Subscriptions start at USD1/month and USD15/month gives you access to all materials.

A few profiled items from the subscribers' area:

1. [Ghost Authorship](#) - **graphic**
2. [A rose thorn by any other name?](#) - **Discussion**
3. [How should respect be expressed in human research?](#) - **Activity sheet**
4. [\(Australia\) National Statement, coercion and consent in clinical research](#) - **Discussion activity**
5. [\(Australia\) Avoiding coercion and inducement in clinical research - discussion activity](#) - **Discussion activity**

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Please join us in saying a big thank you to our new Gold Patrons:

1. **An anonymous research funding body**
2. **Edith Cowan University**
3. **Bond University**
4. **Two anonymous individual donors**

Things You May Have Missed...

Resource Library (<https://ahrecs.com/ahresources>)

1. [Ethical relationships, ethical research in Aboriginal contexts: Perspectives from central Australia - Paper](#)
2. (US) [ER patients given ketamine, other powerful drugs in clinical trials without their consent, FDA finds – STAT](#)
3. [3A Constructive Voices: Panel discussion about institutional implementation of the National Statement \(2007 updated 2018\)](#). Recording of the event, supporting material and links
3. [3B Constructive Voices: Panel discussion about institutional implementation of the Australian Code \(2018\)](#). Recording of the event, supporting material and links
4. (Japan) [When researchers from a particular country dominate retraction statistics, what does it mean? – Retraction Watch](#)
5. [Vulnerability in Research: Defining, Applying, and Teaching the Concept - Book chapter](#)

Blog (<https://ahrecs.com/blog>)

1. [Are we missing the true picture? Stop calling a moneybox, a fishing hook](#)
2. [The value of respect in human research ethics: a conceptual analysis and a practical guide](#)
3. [Undue Influence in Research Between High-Income and Lower-Income Countries](#)
4. [Justice in Human Research Ethics: A Conceptual and Practical Guide](#)

5. It's not (just) about the money



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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.

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

