



## Research Ethics Monthly

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## Reflections on chairing a human research

# ethics committee

Prof. Colin Thomson AM

Chairing an HREC can be complicated, demanding, stressful and tiring but also stimulating, rewarding, satisfying and hugely enjoyable. In this article, I reflect on my experience of being a chair of four HRECs in universities, public health organisations and public sector agencies. Of course I accept, from watching a number of other committees, the ways chairs guide committees to their decisions vary widely, express different personal experiences and can be affected by an institutional environment. As a result, these reflections are not intended to appear as a set of instructions for other chairs.

## The invitation

So, where to begin? One point is at the invitation: am I equipped to take on this role and what do I need to know about the committee and the institution it advises? An HREC chair requires some exposure and familiarity with the ideas that are central to the ethics of human research and a sense of what reaching a decision in an ethics review requires. Ethics committees are unlike typical administrative committees in some significant aspects. The central difference is the nature of the subject matter and the decisions that need to be made: of their nature, they are less definitive than administrative decisions but share, with those, the need for adequate reasons and justification. In this tension between ethical judgement and adequate justification lies their challenge.

Read more

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## Have you served on a research ethics committee for more than three years?

*We want to hear from you.*

We especially want to hear from you if you are serving on a HREC as a lay person, lawyer, psychologist, medical practitioner, researcher/Research Ethics Adviser. We also want to hear from you if you have been serving on a New Zealand research ethics committee for longer than three years.

We are hoping you would be prepared to write 500-1000 words reflecting on your experiences. But if you prefer we can email you some questions.

Drop us a line to [reflections@ahrecs.com](mailto:reflections@ahrecs.com) to discuss.

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## Requesting your input

*We're preparing to work on a new version of the*

*subscribers' area, so we'd appreciate hearing your thoughts and ideas.*

Some of you have told us you'd like to subscribe, but your institution's accounting rules don't allow for open ended online subscriptions. Some subscribers have told us that it would be helpful if the listed items were better organised.

We agree, but the Patreon platform doesn't provide the kind of flexibility to make these kinds of sensible changes.

So, we're exploring the cost and logistics of creating a subscribers' area we control. While we work out its details, the key changes will be:

1. Institutions that wish to access the contents in the subscribers' area will be sent a tax invoice for a 12-month subscription which would be paid by EFT or PayPal.

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## Tracing the Patterns of Research Ethics Regulation in Taiwan

### 台灣的研究倫理規範之發展

甘偵蓉 Gan Zhen-Rong<sup>1</sup> and 馬克·伊瑟利 Mark Israel<sup>2</sup>

Many commentators on research ethics have been based in the Global North and, when we find research ethics regulations that look very much like our own, we tend to make assumptions about the ways in which these patterns of regulation have unfolded. Apart from being disrespectful to local histories, insensitive to difference and intellectually lazy, failure to engage with the rich history of regulatory practices in different jurisdictions makes it hard for research ethicists to learn from others. That is hardly a position with which most people working in the field of research ethics would want to be associated.

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## While you are here...

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1. [Notes from a Scandal: What Happens Once the Inquiry is Over?](#) - **Commentary**
2. [Calling all AHRECS subscribers](#) - **Comment on a graphic (We've already received some constructive feedback and a suggestion)**
3. [Designing a strong institutional approach to the ethical design and conduct of evaluative practice](#) - **Template**
4. [Evaluative practice or human research?](#) - **Graphic**
5. [Collegiate Research Ethics Adviser network](#) - **Graphic**
6. [Notes about establishing a Research Ethics Adviser network](#) - **Resource**
7. [Information privacy in human research – a second resource](#) - **ppt with embedded audio by Colin Thomson AM**

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**Two universities that asked to remain anonymous**

**A national research funding body that asked to remain anonymous**

**University of Southern of Queensland**

**University of Wollongong Ethics Unit**

**5 researchers who asked to remain anonymous**

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## Things You May Have Missed...

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

1. ["Predatory" company uses Canadian universities to sell shoddy conferences](#) - Ottawa Citizen
2. [‘They’re not property’: the people who want their ancestors back from British](#)

[museums](#) - The Guardian

3. (US) [Safeguards for human studies can't cope with big data Editorial](#) - Nature

4. [Genomic Research Through an Indigenous Lens: Understanding the Expectations](#) - Paper

5. [On "truly" understanding the risk](#) – The Ethics Blog

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

1. [Kua hinga te tōtara i Te Waonui-a-Tāne, the tōtara tree has fallen in Tāne's great forest](#)

2. [Interest in 'self-plagiarism'](#)

3. [Institutional approaches to evaluative practice](#)

4. [Conducting research with \(not on\) consumers in health - exploring ethical considerations](#)

5. [Sage Methods Minute. January Spotlight: Research Ethicsb](#)



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