



RESEARCH ETHICS MONTHLY

JULY 2019

Dear <<First Name>>,

First, our apologies; the link to subscribe, has been broken in the last few editions. The correct address is <https://ahrecs.com/about-subscribing-to-the-research-ethics-monthly>. If you are not receiving these editions directly please subscribe. More information about the Research Ethics Monthly can be found on the [blog pages](#).

As you may have noticed (if not visit www.ahrecs.com more often... lol) the LinkedIn feed on our website is broken. We know what the problem is and we're working on the solution. Following us on social media ([LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#)) is a great way to keep informed about additions to news and other information.





Should you be worried about paying children to take part in research?

Associate Professor Stephanie Taplin, Institute of Child Protection Studies, Australian Catholic University



The commentary below by **Virginia Morrow**, Visiting Professor, University College London

Decision-making about children's participation in research requires consideration of factors such as the risk or sensitivity of the study, payments, study methods and the potential benefits for participants (NHMRC, 2007: Ch: 4.2). Although these issues are generally weighed up by adult decision-makers, including ethics committees, organisational gatekeepers and parents, it is important that children and young people are given the opportunity to make their own decisions about participating in research about issues that affect them (NHMRC, 2007: Ch: 4.2).

In Australia and other developed countries, it is common to provide payments to adult research participants as compensation or reimbursement. However, research payments for children are more contentious, even when research involves low or negligible risk. The general principle is that payments must not be offered at such a level that they become an inducement that is likely to encourage participants to take risks they would not be willing to accept with smaller payments (NHMRC, 2007: Ch: 2.2; Appelbaum, Lidz, & Klitzman, 2009; Wendler, Rackoff, Emanuel, & Grady, 2002; Spriggs, 2010; Singer & Couper, 2008). However, a lack of specific guidance has led some ethics committees to refuse research payments for children (Bagley et al., 2007), which may in turn reduce the likelihood of children participating in research about issues that affect them.

The *Managing Ethical Studies on Sensitive Issues* (MESSI) study used online

surveys to present children and decision-makers with hypothetical scenarios of varying risk (or sensitivity) and payments, and tested their influence on participation.

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Proportional processes can sometimes be the answer to a few (apparently competing) problems

But they shouldn't equate to abridged consideration

Dr Gary Allen | AHRECS senior consultant | [Profile](#)

Professor Mark Israel | AHRECS senior consultant | [Profile](#)

Professor Colin Thomson AM | AHRECS senior consultant | [Profile](#)



There are three things that we have consistently found when we have conducted desktop audits of human research ethics arrangements:

1. Researchers believe the manner in which their interactions with their institution's human research ethics arrangements are being treated is disproportional to the real risks and ethical sensitivity of their work. Symptoms include delays waiting for the next meeting of the research ethics committee and lengthy forms, which seem excessive for a project that might be following the well-established practice in a discipline. For busy researchers, this seems to confirm their suspicion that the research ethics committee is indifferent to the nature and value of the project and the process is about policing their conduct and catching them in

wrongdoing. This perception can be especially acute in disciplines other than those in health sciences and clinical trials and is particularly prevalent for participant-directed designs. We have written about the dangers of this adversarial climate (Israel et al., 2016), and as consultants have advised many research institutions on how to tackle it.

2. Research ethics committees (and research office staff) talk of being overwhelmed with work (and sometimes paper), struggling to find time to focus properly on the most risky and ethically challenging projects, and being left with insufficient resources to conduct professional development or other constructive activities that could improve ethical practice (design, review, conduct or reporting). One of the common complaints of review bodies who are overwhelmed by their workload is that matters would be improved if more researchers were more familiar with and understood the requirements and submitted better applications.

Reviewers and researchers commonly point to the other as the source of the problem and insist only change to the other party's attitudes will fix the 'ethics problem'.

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The F-word, or how to fight fires in the research literature

Professor Jennifer Byrnel University of Sydney Medical School and Children's Hospital at Westmead



At home, I am constantly fighting the F-word. Channelling my mother, I find myself saying things like 'don't use that word', 'not here', 'not in this house'. As

you can probably gather, it's a losing battle.

Research has its own F-words – ‘falsification’, ‘fabrication’, different colours of the overarching F-word, ‘fraud’. Unlike the regular F-word, most researchers assume that there's not much need to use the research versions. Research fraud is considered comfortably rare, the actions of a few outliers. This is the ‘bad apple’ view of research fraud – that fraudsters are different, and born, not made. These rare individuals produce papers that eventually act as spot fires, damaging their fields, or even burning them to the ground. However, as most researchers are not affected, the research enterprise tends to just shrug its collective shoulders, and carry on.

But, of course, there's a second explanation for research fraud – the so-called ‘bad barrel’ hypothesis – that research fraud can be provoked by poorly regulated, extreme pressure environments. This is a less comfortable idea, because this implies that regular people might be tempted to cheat if subjected to the right (or wrong) conditions. Such environments could result in more affected papers, about more topics, published in more journals. This would give rise to more fires within the literature, and more scientific casualties. But again, these types of environments are not considered to be common, or widespread.

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The new subscribers' area is now live

We hope to see you there

<https://www.ahrecs.vip>

Based on feedback we have received about the Patreon platform and accounting requirements, we have built an in-house platform, which can be purchased on the basis of an annual invoice and paid by credit card, EFT or one-off PayPal payment direct to AHRECS.

The content of the new subscribers' area is more obviously arranged around topics, keywords and type of content. We are currently copying content from the Patreon site to www.ahrecs.vip (a process we hope to finish in the next few days).

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A few profiled items from the subscribers' area:

1. [A 15-minute game](#) based on the Values and Elements of the National Statement (2007 updated 2018)
2. [Proportional processes](#) resource
3. [Publish unethical research?](#) commentary
4. [An ethical conduct report](#) graphic
5. [Ethical Conduct Reports](#) - Notes on structure - Resource
6. [Notes from a Scandal: What Happens Once the Inquiry is Over?](#) - Commentary
7. [Designing a strong institutional approach to the ethical design and conduct](#) - Resource
8. [Evaluative practice or human research?](#) - Graphic
9. [Research Ethics Adviser network](#) - Graphic
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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

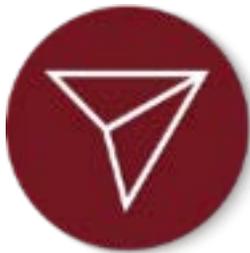
Things You May Have Missed...

Our Resource Library

- [6th World Conference on Research Integrity](#) – WCRI2019
- [\(Australia\) Medicare data used to recruit people with bipolar for research](#) – Sydney Morning Herald
- [Conducting Accessible Research: Including People With Disabilities in Public Health, Epidemiological, and Outcomes Studies](#) - Paper
- [It's Time to Lift the Veil on Peer Review](#) – UnDark
- [The Rise of Junk Science](#) – The Walrus
- [Journal Publishes Concern About Study Using Forced Organ Donation](#) –

Our Blog

- [Research Ethics Review as a Box-Ticking Exercise](#)
- [We respect you... we just don't need to hear from you any more: Should the consumer and their community participate in research as partners instead of just being subjects?](#)
- ["Reminder about service options and an easy way to pay AHRECS," we say... aware of how corporate sleazy that sounds](#)
- [Is it something I said \(or the way I said it\)?](#)
- [Research Ethics and the New Gene-editing Technology](#)
- [Complainant anonymity in misconduct proceedings depends on the forum](#)
- [A call for a national inquiry into the burden of research ethics and governance](#)



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