



JUNE 2020

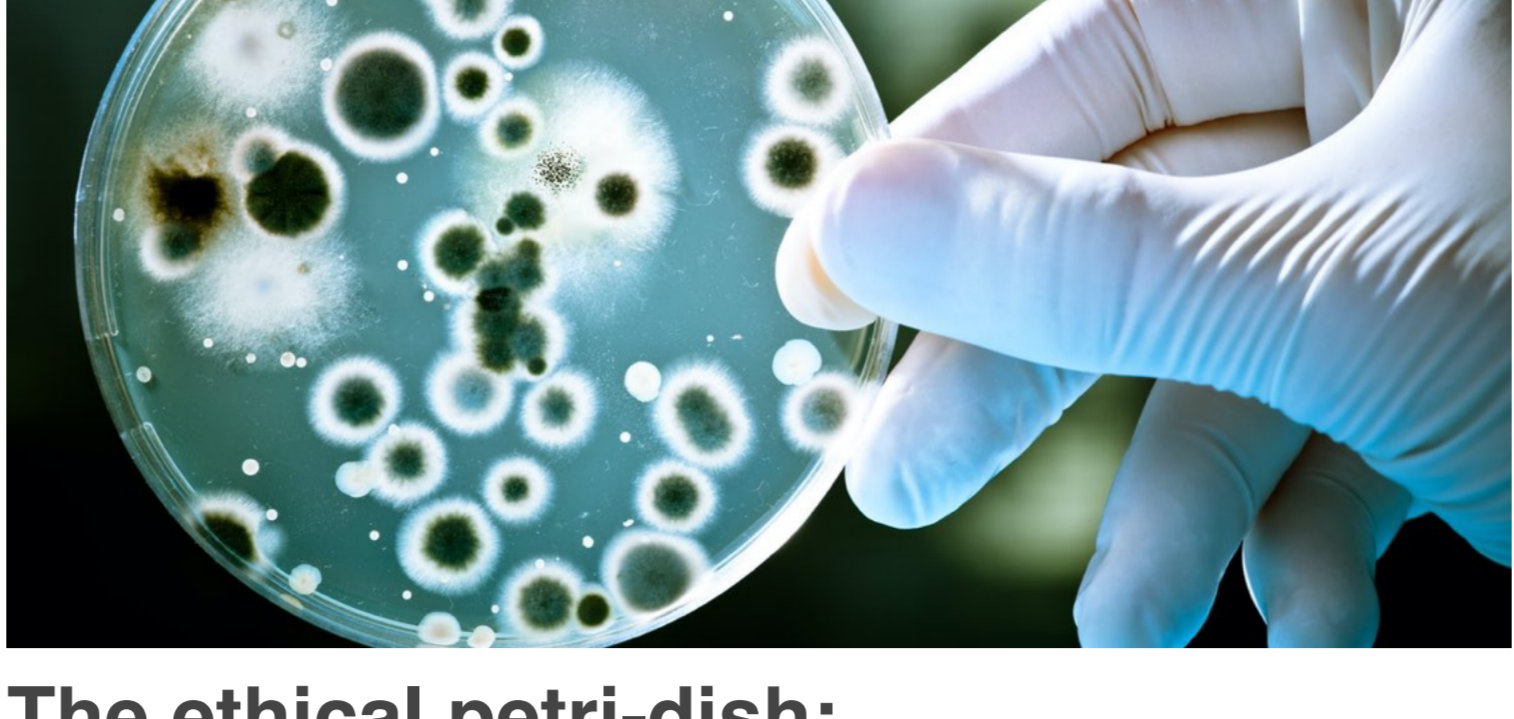
Dear <<First Name>>,

Welcome to the June 2020 edition of the Research Ethics Monthly.

If you know someone who may be interested in *Research Ethics Monthly*, please ask them to consider subscribing at this link, because it is incredibly affirming and would be greatly appreciated. Subscribing is free, easy and keeps our in-house internet elf happy.

More information about the Research Ethics Monthly can be found on the [blog pages](#).

The Research Ethics Monthly is possible thanks to the generous support of our [institutional](#) and [individual patrons](#). If you enjoy the monthly dose of human research ethics and research integrity **please consider becoming a patron**. It's not a lot of money, but makes a huge difference to us.



The ethical petri-dish: recommendations for the design of university science curricula

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Ethics (thinking and practice) is intrinsic to the nature of science. Ethical practices within science-related professions are mandated by policies, frameworks, standards and cultural norms. A scientist should also consider the broader implications for society when applying scientific knowledge.

Does our laboratory start working to develop a vaccine for Covid-19 or continue working on that potential cure for childhood leukemia? What will happen to the endangered Giant Freshwater Lobster if we remodel the hydrology of that major river so farmers in North-West Tasmania can grow more potatoes? Should we approve the use of GM technology to develop Vitamin A-rich rice?

Science graduates must be equipped to contribute to such complex debates, and empowered to make scientific decisions within a sound ethical framework (Johnson, 2010).

The *Science Standards Statement* (Jones, Yates and Kelder, 2011), the national benchmark for bachelor-level science degrees in Australia, specifies that graduates will demonstrate a coherent understanding of science, and be able to explain the role and relevance of science in society. society (TLO 1: Jones et al., 2011: p.12). Furthermore, they will be equipped to understand and work within ethical frameworks, and "have some understanding of their social and cultural responsibilities as they investigate the natural world." (TLO 5.3: Jones et al., 2011: p.15).

The argument that there is 'no space' for ethics in the science curriculum is no longer valid (Booth and Garrett, 2004; McGowan 2013). However there remain significant barriers to the teaching and assessment of ethical knowledge, skills and capabilities in undergraduate science curricula. We summarise these as: debate and dissent around *what* should be taught, *who* should teach ethical thinking, and *how* should it be taught and assessed.

It's not just about plagiarism

Ethics in science falls into two broad categories:

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Friday arvo funnies

Further to last month's note, now available from the LinkedIn page (<https://www.linkedin.com/showcase/friday-afternoon-funnies>) are all our Friday afternoon funnies images that have been posted to the AHRECS web site since 2016. We love Don Mayne's cartoons because they invariably make a good point while being a good chuckle. You may have noticed we have been creating in our subscribers' area ([institutional](#) | [individual](#)) some activity sheets based on Don's work.

The thinking behind the subscribers' area

An important goal for our establishment of the subscribers' areas (institutional – <https://www.ahrecs.vp/> | individual – <https://www.patreon.com/ahrecs>) was to provide resources and material that might be of interest and value in Australasia. This material recently has included short talks on research integrity and human research ethics matters, as well as discussion sheets on a range of matters to provide participatory components for you to incorporate into your in-house professional development workshops). There are already over 50 items in the library and we are adding more than two every month.

Nevertheless, by becoming an AHRECS patron you are making a valued contribution to help us cover the costs of producing and distributing the *Research Ethics Monthly* – [www.ahrecs.com/blog](#). Your generous support also helps us operate the Resource Library – [www.ahrecs.com/resources](#) (which currently contains over 1,900 entries).

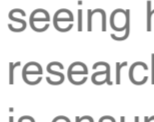
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Worried your researchers might not be treating human research ethics as a core component of good research practice? Concerned they are not seeing it as their responsibility?

All of us might be part of the problem

Dr Gary Allen
AHRECS Senior Consultant



For human research ethics, the big problem is that researchers might not be seeing human research ethics as a vital component of doing research well, and researchers might not perceive ethics as their responsibility. A related problem is ensuring the ethical design and conduct of research might not be perceived as also institutional responsibility.

The usual response has been to

1. grab research ethics review as a governance weapon to be wielded with ardent fervour.
2. slam submitted applications we perceive as being incomplete or ill-advised,
3. respond with scores of directive conditions. And
4. use enforcement and sanctions procedures to punish the researchers who dare to resist.

But in attempting to solve this problem, have we created a worse one?

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Patreon and GST

From 1 July, Patreon will be factoring GST into their payment system. AHRECS has decided we will not be increasing our payment tiers. In practice, this means we will be receiving 1/11th less of subscriptions from individuals. We rely on our patrons ([individual](#) and [institutional](#)) to help us keep running the Research Ethics Monthly and Resource Library. While we keep adding exclusive content to our subscribers' pages, we hope people become and remain patrons because they are fans of our monthly publication and resource links and want to see them continue. **So if you're not a patron, please become one (individual or institutional) - or if you are a patron, please keep renewing.**



Embedding clinical research as part of routine healthcare: Managing the potential for competing interests.

Nik Zepi
AHRECS Consultant



Clinical trials are widely accepted as the best method for understanding whether any particular medical intervention is safe, efficacious, acceptable to patients and cost-effective. Almost every Health Service in Australia runs clinical trials of one sort or another. Enrolment of patients (in this instance they are all patients and not healthy volunteers) into clinical trials through health services operates as a separate activity to routine health care delivery and is managed through its own governance processes rather than as a part of clinical governance. This is widely recognised to be necessary but is unfortunately inefficient, duplicative in many instances, has a lack of objectivity and as a result of poor resourcing and training, is often slow and regarded as problematic by the research community. Sadly, there is a fairly widespread view amongst researchers that Research Governance is a bureaucratic hurdle rather than a means to ensure their research will be safe, quality work, be well managed and have significant impact.

One of the problems with the current system is that it treats all clinical trials as a single category rather than recognising the profound differences between trials that are seeking to establish new evidence for experimental therapeutics and those that are comparing existing therapeutic interventions (so-called Comparative Effectiveness Trials-CETs). It is clear that the risks of being enrolled in a CET are likely to be less than if being enrolled in a trial involving an unapproved therapeutic. Indeed many patients expect clinicians to deliver evidence based care, rather than practice variation, which can only elicit from high quality CETs. However, it is also true that if a person is randomised into the standard-of-care control arm of a trial of an unapproved therapeutic is at no greater risk than if they were not in the trial. Indeed, there is a broad range of evidence that participation in trials has an overall benefit in terms of safety and outcomes even for the control arms so one could argue that being in trial is by and large better than not being in a trial. It is also widely believed that the act of randomisation, the key feature underlying the power of clinical trials, is in itself risky and lifts any trial into a category that requires careful management. The National Statement does not make any such comment about risk related to randomisation and this view is one of subjective convention rather than one based on any proper assessment of risk.

Another feature of managing clinical trials is ensuring that potential participants are given appropriate information free of any coercion or inducements so that they can make a completely autonomous and sufficiently informed decision to participate or not. To ensure this a great deal of time and attention is paid to reviewing increasingly lengthy and complicated Participant Information Sheets and Consent forms (PICFs). In contrast almost no meaningful time is spent on evaluating the skills of the team in providing the information and being able to answer questions in a manner that ensures there is no coercive or inducive behaviour. Moreover, to my knowledge, no AHRCO has ever sent observers to audit how a participant is recruited, whether consumer input was sought in the development of the enrolment strategy or to evaluate notes taken as part of the consent process. This would appear to be the more important component of understanding whether the ethical issues arising from enrolling participants in a trial are being met.

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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).

INSTITUTIONAL

Subscriptions for institutions cost \$350/year. A tax invoice will be provided. Payments can be made by credit card over the phone, EFT or via PayPal. To become a patron email patrons@ahrecs.vp

INDIVIDUAL

Subscriptions start at USD1/month and USD15/month gives you access to all materials. See <https://www.patreon.com/ahrecs>

A few profiled items from the subscribers' area:

1. eConsent – A Human Research Ethics talk by Nik Zepi
2. Lost data – A Research Integrity discussion activity
3. Disaster recovery plan – A Research Integrity discussion activity
4. Diversity in consent strategies - A Human Research Ethics discussion activity
5. Urgent rather than late - A Human Research Ethics commentary
6. Right to withdrawl - A Human Research Ethics discussion activity
7. Authorship – A Research Integrity talk by Prof. Mark Israel
8. Consent: Who are they written for? - A Human Research Ethics discussion activity
9. Public need and private pardon – A Research Integrity discussion activity - A Research Integrity discussion activity
10. Consent and partially completed surveys - A Human Research Ethics resource

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

- ANROWS
- Barwon Health
- Bendigo Health
- Carriegen
- Central Queensland University
- James Cook University
- The Internal Ethics Review Panel of the Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business (Commonwealth)
- Torrens University
- University of Melbourne
- The University of Sydney Ethics Office
- University of Wollongong Ethics Unit

By their generosity they keep Research Ethics Monthly free and ad free

Things You May Have Missed...

Our Resource Library

01. Copyright Douch: a game to teach, and bring discussion, about copyright licences and exceptions – UK Copyright Library
02. What Keeps Patients Out of Clinical Trials? – Medscape
03. It's never okay to say no to teachers' Children's research consent and dissent in conforming schools contexts - Paper
04. Is N-Hacking Ever OK? A simulation-based study - Paper
05. Zombie papers: Why do papers by the most prolific fraudster in history keep getting cited? – Retraction Watch
06. A fascinating history of clinical trials from their beginnings in Babylon – Medium
07. Should We Purposely Infect Healthy Volunteers With Covid-19? – WIRED
08. Rock samples aren't archived or shared. They need to be. geologists warn, nations in a 'reproducibility crisis.' – The Washington Post
09. What to do when your research comes under fire – Nature Index
10. Improving communication when seeking informed consent: a randomised controlled study of a computer-based method for providing information to prospective clinical trial participants - Paper
11. A Disclosure Form for Work Submitted to Medical Journals - Paper - Editorial
12. (US) Ethics questions swirl around historic Parkinson's experiment – STAT
13. (China, Australia) Journals have retracted or flagged more than 40 papers from China that appear to have used organ transplants from executed prisoners – Retraction Watch
14. Multimedia in improving informed consent for caesarean section: A randomised controlled trial - Paper
15. Virus Pushes Science And Its Controversies Centre Stage – Barrons

There were more than 42 more great items in the last 50 days. Follow us on social media to get an alert when new items are added ([LinkedIn](#) | [Twitter](#) | [Facebook](#))

Our Blog

1. When Research is the treatment, why the research/clinical care divide doesn't always work
2. How we interpret the words 'proportional review'
3. A checklist to assist a supervisor to check a candidate's research ethics
4. Why autism research needs more input from autistic people
5. AHRECS and COVID-19
6. COVID-19: human research and human research ethics review
7. Towards a code of conduct for ethical post-disaster research
8. Can I use your answers anyway?
9. Towards a code of conduct for ethical post-disaster research
10. Working flexibly through the Coronavirus: Continuing professional development in research integrity or human research ethics?

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.

