

## ***Alberta Health Research Ethics Reciprocity Agreement Announcement***

(February 28, 2011) Alberta is the first jurisdiction in Canada to have a harmonized ethics review process for multi-jurisdictional health research through the signing of the ***Research Ethics Reciprocity Agreement***. This is a legal agreement among six major institutions and agencies that have Research Ethics Boards which perform and oversee reviews of ethics for health research. These partners are: University of Alberta, University of Calgary, University of Lethbridge, the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta, Alberta Health Services, and Alberta Innovates – Health Solutions. Alberta Health and Wellness, and Advanced Education and Technology provided valuable advice.

The Agreement is the result of a collaborative process among the partners, initiated by the Chairs of the Health Research Ethics Boards (the Council of Chairs), and is the first step in a strategic plan developed last year by the Chairs in consultation with key stakeholders. Once implemented, the Agreement will streamline the process of ethics review for multi-site health research studies and response time to health research ethics review requests. Currently, researchers who are part of networks, collaborations, partnerships or teams involving other institutions need to apply for ethics approval at each institution for the same research, a process that can cost researchers valuable time and resources. Thus, the Agreement sets the stage to encourage research across institutions, and supports additional health research activity and investment in Alberta.

All reviews will continue to ensure that the participants are protected in the carrying out of health research in direct compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. The Agreement also respects the independence of the Research Ethics Boards at each institution so that those Boards can identify and respond to issues and concerns particular to their community or jurisdiction.

The Agreement is good news for researchers who will see these process efficiencies translated into savings in time, resources and competitiveness. It is also good news for research and development companies that want to invest in Alberta. A harmonized process for health research ethics review translates into cost savings and value added investment.

The next step is the implementation of the Agreement so that it becomes a reality for Alberta's health research community.

Implementation includes three initial areas of work across Alberta's Health REBs and their sponsoring institutions:

1. Implementing the Reciprocity Agreement
2. Implementing common approaches to informed consent guidelines / templates and a common ethics review application form

3. Establishing system-level capture and flow of appropriate information supported by technology to inform ethics review involving more than one Board and to meet system level needs.

Some aspects of the implementation are anticipated to be enacted quickly while others will take much longer.

Please contact Linda Barrett-Smith at [linda.barrett-smith@albertainnovates.ca](mailto:linda.barrett-smith@albertainnovates.ca) if you have any questions or would like more information.

Sincerely,

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