University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

Institutional Review Board Updates

FALL 2016

IRB News

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We have some new members joining the IRB this fall:

Adam Greenberg is an Assistant Professor of Psychology. He earned a BS and MS in Biomedical Engineering, then transitioned to Neuroscience as a Research Fellow at the National Institutes of Health. Adam completed a PhD in cognitive neuroscience in 2010, did postdoctoral research at Carnegie Mellon University and joined UWM in 2013. His lab explores the neurobiology of attention in humans during visual and auditory stimulation and he was recently featured in the UWM Report for his research on music and the brain: http://uwm.edu/news/psychologist-homing-music-perception-vs-just-sounds/

Adam volunteered to be an IRB member because he values its mission to protect the rights and welfare of human subjects. He bikes to UWM each day and enjoys long walks through Milwaukee's eastside with his wife and dog.

Ken Bennett is a student representative who also hails from the Psychology department. He completed his undergraduate degree at Michigan State University in 2012 and has been a graduate student in Dr. Christine Larson's Affective Neuroscience Lab for the past two years. Currently, he is interested in the relationship between worry, uncertainty, and anxiety. For fun, Ken enjoys going to concerts, playing racquetball, and hiking. He joined the IRB because he thought it would provide a unique opportunity to gain a better understanding of the research conducted at UWM.

Leah Stoiber joins us as the new part-time IRB Administrator. She has a BA in Psychology and an MS in Educational Psychology. She spent the last 3.5 years as a Research Specialist in UWM's Psychology Department, working on a project to improve student success in gateway college courses. She also currently works part-time in Psychology as a lab manager. She is excited to join the IRB team and learn about the wide range of studies conducted by UWM researchers. In her free time, Leah enjoys reading, hiking, drinking coffee, and spending time with her husband and cat.

Submission tip: More is better!

Many of our questions, requests for revisions, and returned submissions are due to one simple problem: There wasn't enough information. If we can't fully understand what you're planning to do, we can't be sure it meets the requirements for IRB approval.

By including plenty of detail the first time, you can often reduce the overall review time for your study.

Upcoming IRB meeting Dates:

- October 7, 2016 (deadline for Full Board submissions is Sep 21)
- November 4, 2016 (deadline for Full Board submissions is Oct 19)
- December 2, 2016 (deadline for Full Board submissions is Nov 16)

Fall IRB Training Sessions Available

This fall, the IRB office will offer several different types of training:

IRB Basics: An introduction to the IRB process and tips for your first IRB submission

Informed Consent Workshop: This will be in two parts. Part 1 will focus on the informed consent document. Part 2 will focus on the informed consent process.

Classroom training (by request): An IRB office staff member will come to your classroom to conduct a session on a topic of your choice.

More details and a link to register can be found at: http://uwm.edu/irb/training/register-trainings/

In-depth Spotlight: Informed Consent Document

Informed consent means participants understand what they're agreeing to. Without a clear and understandable document, true informed consent is more difficult to obtain.

A common misconception is that the consent document should follow the same scholarly writing rules as the protocol or a published article. It doesn't have to—and in fact, in many cases, it shouldn't! Here are some writing tips:

1. Write for your audience. One size does not fit all. Think carefully about your research participants' education level and background before you start writing. Imagine you're talking with a potential participant and telling him or her about your study. What would you say? Write your consent document that way.

2. Write in second person. Following the same logic, write as though you are having a conversation. Use "you" and "I" instead of "the participant" and "the researcher". Hey look, it's shorter and easier to read, too!

3. Check the reading level of your document. The grammar check function in Word makes this easy to do, by telling you the Flesch-Kincaid reading level. If you're enrolling 4th graders, make sure your assent document is at or below 4th grade reading level. For college students, a 12th grade reading level is fine (but they'd still probably appreciate 8th-10th grade instead). To give you a reference, the Flesch-Kincaid grade level on this article is 8.2.

4. Our templates are tools, not strict requirements. We provide a number of templates for your convenience, tailored to specific study activities. When you use our templates, you can be sure you are including all the federally-required elements of informed consent: http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/regulations-and-policy/guidance/checklists/index.html. But that doesn't mean you have to use our templates word-for-word. Feel free to edit and customize, or even write your own. Just don't forget the required elements!

The Federal Plain Language Guidelines are a great resource for simplifying your writing. You can download them at http://www.plainlanguage.gov.

Some highlights:

- Avoid technical language
- Write short sections with only one topic per section
- Write short sentences
- Use active voice ("I will ask you about xyz" instead of "You will be asked about xyz")
- ~~Utilize~~ Use the simplest form of a verb
- Include examples
- Include only information that is relevant to your audience
- Minimize abbreviations
- Use contractions
- Paragraphs aren't the only way to give information. Try using:
  - ◊ Bullet points
  - ◊ Lists
  - ◊ Tables