EFFECTIVENESS OF INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARDS (IRBS) IN PROMOTING RESEARCH INTEGRITY AND ACCOUNTABILITY

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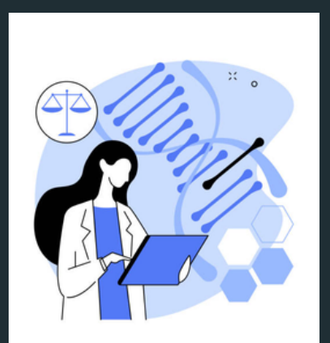


BACKGROUND

Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) play crucial roles in observing, monitoring, and addressing research integrity issues among researchers. Their primary purpose is to ensure, both initially and periodically, that appropriate measures protect human research subjects and adhere to ethical guidelines. IRBs review proposals, assess participant risks, evaluate informed consent, and monitor ongoing studies for compliance. Despite these responsibilities, IRBs are not always effective, raising questions about their fulfillment of these roles.

AIM

This research seeks to assess the effectiveness of Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) in promoting research integrity and accountability. Particularly how effective IRBs are in maintaining ethical standards in research, protecting the rights and welfare of human research participants, and ensuring responsible conduct of research.

Research Questions

1. What are the known and outlined roles of IRBs in the research process?
2. What approaches do IRBs employ in maintaining ethical standards in research, protecting the rights and welfare of research subjects, and ensuring responsible conduct in research?
3. How effective are these approaches in maintaining research integrity and accountability?

METHOD

Phase 1: A systematized review to assess from secondary data, the roles of IRBs in the research process, approaches used in ensuring research integrity and the efficiency of these approaches.

Phase 2: A qualitative approach using semi-structured interviews of key stakeholders including researchers, members of IRB, administrators, and regulatory authorities to assess the roles of IRBs in the research process, approaches used in ensuring research integrity and accountability and the effectiveness of these approaches. Thematic analysis will be adopted to extract meaningful themes and patterns from interview responses.

RESULTS

Roles

Phase 1 highlights important roles of IRBs, which include protecting research subjects, providing oversight and strengthening compliance, and helping to inculcate a culture of ethical awareness and responsibility among researchers.

Approaches:

Pre-approval processes

- Promoting ethical awareness in research
- Ensuring inclusion of informed consent
- Ethical review of research proposals/protocols to ensure adherence to ethical guidelines
- Ensure researchers receive training and education in research ethics

Post approval process

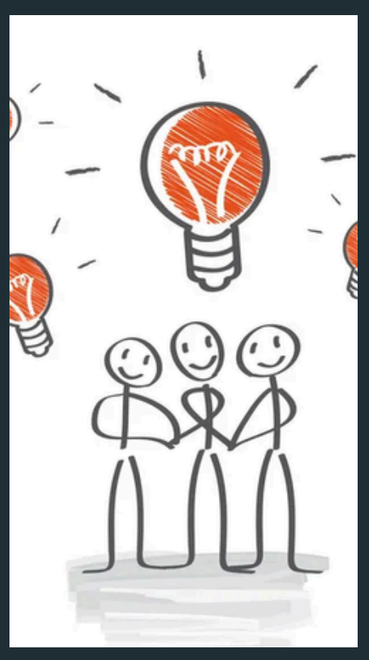
- Requiring Annual Reporting
- Conducting Site visits
- Assessing study implementation processes for compliance
- Inculcate ethical awareness and responsibility among researchers

Assessment of Effectiveness of IRB approaches

IRBs are generally more successful in promoting research integrity at the pre-approval stages. They are effective in ensuring that research proposals comply with ethical standards and regulations by assessing risks and benefits, ensuring informed consent, and safeguarding participants from harm.

There is limited evidence of IRB activities during the study implementation process.

Challenges that hinder this function of IRBs include workload issues, variability in standards, bureaucratic inefficiencies, resource constraints, and limited capacity training. Continuous efforts to address these challenges and improve IRB processes are essential for enhancing their performance and upholding high standards of research integrity.



CONCLUSION

The outcomes of this research will contribute to the body of knowledge on IRBs and provide practical implications for policymakers, institutions, researchers, and IRB members.

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