

Position Statement

Acceptable Methods of Recruiting Participants for Research

Recruiting participants to research studies always involves access to personal information about potential participants (for example, an individual's name) and often requires access to personal health information (for example, diagnostic and treatment information about an individual). For this reason, recruitment methods must strike a balance between the legal and ethical goods of protecting the privacy of personal and personal health information and avoiding inappropriate inducements to research participation, while promoting the conduct of good quality scientific research.

First Contact for Research Participation

The Board generally requires that the first contact with persons about their potential participation in a research study must be made by someone who has an established relationship with the individuals. For examples, physicians or nurses may discuss participation in research projects with patients who are currently under their care. An administrator may discuss with professional colleagues their possible participation in a study that the administrator is conducting. An athlete/researcher may approach fellow athletes to discuss a research project involving new training methods.

If an investigator does not have an established relationship with a potential subject, the investigator may ask another person who does have such a relationship with the potential subject to present information about the study. That person may then secure the individuals' permission for the researcher or delegate to approach them to discuss the study. Alternatively, they may invite the potential subject to contact the researcher directly to discuss participation.

Researchers may recruit potential subjects by means of advertisements or information posters placed in suitable locations. The Board must review and approve such advertisements or postings before they are displayed. Information about a study may be circulated to potential participants by phone or mail, provided that the phone contact or mailing is initiated by someone with an established relationship with the potential participants (for example, a mailing from a physician's office to her patients; a mailing from a school principal's office to parents of children potentially eligible for participation in a classroom research project.)

These same provisions apply to research involving children or persons who may lack capacity. First contact with families, guardians, or caregivers must be made by someone who has an established relationship with the potential participant.

Recruitment of Subjects to Emergency or Urgent Research Studies

Research studies in emergency or urgent situations sometimes require recruitment of subjects quickly. The researcher may not be the person involved in the potential subject's care and may have no way of identifying potential research subjects without access to their personal health information. Upon request, the Board may allow other methods of identifying potential subjects

in these circumstances, including having the caregiver inform the researcher about the patient or allowing the researcher to review admission logs or other information records to identify potential subjects. In these circumstances, the onus is on the researcher to establish that such access to personal health information is necessary for the conduct of the research and is compliant with the provisions under the Health Information Act.