

Research Ethics Committees

Section 73(1) requires RECs to register with the NHREC, which is mandated to register and audit health research ethics committees. Registered RECs are audited by the NHREC to comply with the process stipulated by the National Health Act, 2003.

Secretariat

The Health Research Directorate in the Department of Health provides Secretariat and Technical support to the NHREC.

National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) and National Health Research Committee (NHRC)

The National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) and the National Health Research Committee (NHRC) are distinct entities with diverse mandates as stipulated in the National Health Act of 2003.

The NHREC is responsible for research ethics and protection of human research participants as well as researchers, whereas the NHRC must identify health research priorities, based on the burden of disease, the health needs of individuals and of communities.

Contacting the NHREC

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National Health Research Ethics Council

NHREC



Overview

The National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) was established by the Minister of Health in 2006, in terms of section 72 of the National Health Act, Act No. 61 of 2003.



health

Department:
Health
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

Main objective

The NHREC's core responsibilities are to set ethical norms and standards for health research and to advance research ethics in South Africa; to promote, ensure and monitor compliance by health research ethics committees, using existing and new regulations and guidelines; and to register and audit health research ethics committees.

The responsibilities of the NHREC rest on the need to ensure ethical integrity in research involving human participants; and that research is based on sound scientific principles.

The norms and standards are to be found in the Department of Health's ethics guidelines, which include the relevant structures and processes, supported by a legal framework and regulations.

Appointment of NHREC members.

Members are appointed by the Minister of Health in terms of Section 72(2)(a) of the National Health Act. Eligibility criteria include:

- a. knowledge of and experience in research ethics or law,
- b. involvement in health or ethics disciplines,
- c. represent the Medicines Control Council (MCC), the Department of Health or the interests of the community.

NHREC Code of Conduct

A Code of Conduct requires NHREC members, to demonstrate and maintain integrity, honesty, good judgement and professionalism.

NHREC Members (2013 – 2016)

Prof D du Toit (Chairperson)
Prof D van Bogaert (Vice Chairperson)
Prof A Dhai (2013)
Dr S Ncanana,
Ms K Nevhuthalu (2013-2014)
Adv L Nevondwe
Prof A Pope
Dr N Ramalivhana
Dr L Schoeman (2013-2014)
Ms T Sebata
Dr M Sekhoacha
Dr N Sithebe
Ms C Slack
Prof AA van Niekerk
Ms E Zwane

Functions of the NHREC

The NHREC is expected to

- a. Determine guidelines for the functioning of health research ethics committees;
- b. Register and audit research ethics committees for human and animal Research;
- c. Set norms and standards for conducting research on humans and animals, including clinical trials;
- d. Adjudicate complaints about the functioning of health research ethics committees and hear any complaint by a researcher who believes that he or

she has been discriminated against by a health research ethics committee;

- e. Refer to the relevant statutory health professional council matters involving violation or potential violation of an ethical or professional rule by a health care provider;
- f. Institute disciplinary action as maybe prescribed against any person found to be in violation of any norms and standards, or guidelines, set for the conducting of research in terms of the National Health Act;
- g. Advise the National and Provincial Departments on ethical issues;
- h. Perform any other activities that may be required to maintain and improve ethical practice in research.

NHREC Working Groups

Working Groups and Committees have been established to deal with the Council's responsibilities in a systematic manner.

They include

- i. The EXCO
- ii. Complaints, Advisory and Disciplinary Committee
- iii. Quality Promotion and Enhancement Working Group
- iv. Norms and Standards Working Group
- v. Legal and Regulatory Working Group.

The Council may from time to time co-opt members with relevant expertise to provide advice. Co-opted members join working groups where necessary, but do not have the powers of the NHREC.