**Rural Research Network**

**Research Ethics Board**

1. **Governance**

The Chief Executive Officer (“CEO”) of each participating institution is responsible for the implementation of research ethics policy through the Rural Research Network (“RRN”) Research Ethics Board (“REB”). The Research Office at Winchester District Memorial Hospital (“WDMH”) provides support for the REB.

The REB is independent in its decision-making responsibilities and has the authority to review and approve, reject, suspend or terminate research, and to set out and follow its individual policies and procedures. Each institution retains the authority to disallow the conduct of research even if approved by the REB; REB dis-approval cannot be overturned by the organization.

1. **Purpose and Responsibilities**

The REB is mandated in ethical decision making by the Tri-Council Policy Statement, Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and Canadian and Ontario laws and regulations. The REB is guided by the following core principles as defined in Tri-Council Policy Statement: Respect for Persons, Concern for Welfare, and Justice.

REB responsibilities include the following:

1. Developing and updating policies and procedures relating to research projects involving human participants;
2. Reviewing the ethical and scientific approval of all institutional projects before implementation;
3. Conducting ongoing and continuing review of approved projects, including consideration of adverse events, procedural amendments, and complaints;
4. Conducting reconsideration of research proposals appealed by researchers;
5. Providing an annual report to the Chief Executive Officer;
6. Maintaining qualifications and knowledge of research ethics and use of human participants in research.
7. **Composition**

The REB shall be made up of no less than five (5) members, including both men and women, plus a non-voting administrative assistant, and include at least the following:

1. Two (2) members whose primary experiences and expertise are in a scientific discipline and who have a broad experience in the methods and areas of research to be approved;
2. One (1) member knowledgeable in ethics relevant to research;
3. One (1) member knowledgeable in Canadian laws relevant to research;
4. And one (1) member who is from the community with no formal affiliation with the organization.

Quorum will consist of at least five (5) board members who meet the listed requirements. Alternate REB members may be appointed and may discharge the duties of an absent REB member, provided that the membership requirements are still met.

The REB members shall be appointed by the CEO on the advice of the Chief Research Officer and VP of Clinical services and will serve for three-year terms. Terms may be renewed twice with possible extension.

The REB Chair shall be appointed by the CEOs, normally for two years.

The REB Vice-Chair shall be designated by the REB Chair, and discharge the responsibilities assigned by the Chair.

1. **Meetings and Decision-Making**

The REB shall meet at least once per quarter in person, unless there are exceptional circumstances that prevent so from occurring. The Chair is responsible for authorizing alternate methods of meeting attendance/participation.

The review process for each research proposal will be decided by the REB Chair, based on the level of foreseeable risk to participants. For studies involving no more than minimal risk or for minor changes, delegated review proceedings may occur. For studies or changes involving more than minimal risk, full-board review proceedings must occur.

Full-board REB decisions will be made by majority of the REB members present at a board meeting, excluding those recused due to conflict of interest (“COI”). Consensus will be sought before an official vote is held. Delegated review will be coordinated by the REB Chair.

The REB shall be permitted to allow researchers, ad hoc advisors, and observers to attend meetings, should they sign confidentiality agreements and contribute only if they are knowledgeable and invited by the REB Chair. These individuals shall not be allowed to be present while the REB is deliberating.

1. **General Terms**

REB review shall be performed in a timely manner, and decisions shall be promptly communicated to the applicant once prepared.

REB members will be responsible for disclosing all potential COIs to the REB Chair, who may request that the individual remove themselves from deliberations according to COI policies and procedures.

Each REB member, observer, advisor, and administrator must respect the confidentiality of proposal submission materials and meeting deliberations. These individuals will be expected to sign a Confidentiality Agreement; timing and frequency of signature are specific to each REB role.