
Island Health HREB Guidance during COVID-19

COVID-19 Island Health's Health Research Ethics Board (HREB) Chairs' Bulletin #1, 27 March 2020

****Please** review important announcements [here](#) before reading below.

Dear Island Health Researchers,

In light of the COVID-19 Global Pandemic, we would like to inform you of the following information:

Please be aware that, as the current situation is very fluid, these interim policies may well change, and we will update you as necessary in future bulletins.

All currently approved studies that involve in-person interactions are suspended unless your study meets one of the three following criteria:

1. Your existing study could be pivoted to integrate COVID-19 research; you want to make an amendment (PAA) to an existing study;
2. Stopping your current study puts Participants at risk;
3. Your study method could be changed (submit an amendment) to remote/distance methods (i.e. Skype, Zoom, telephone calls).

Please contact the HREB if you think your research fits into these three exceptions.

Researchers Submitting a NEW COVID-19 study or COVID-19 Related study:

- COVID-19 research is the priority for the HREB. If you are in the **process of developing** a COVID-19 related protocol/study, please contact both (cc) Sarah Bennett at Elizabeth.Bennett@viha.ca and Dawn.Pollon@viha.ca for an immediate study consult. We can help you design the study as you prepare for ethical review and approval.
- If you are about to **submit** a COVID-19 related study, we do ask that you notify us so that we ensure your review begins in a timely manner.
- To facilitate any **new COVID-19 research**, it must have "COVID-19" in the study name/nickname.
- To facilitate any COVID-19 related PAAs to currently approved non-COVID-19 research in UBC's PREP/RIS platform, add "COVID-19 Related Protocol Changes" to the PAA name (nickname).
- Any email correspondence to the HREB regarding a COVID-19 study must have "COVID-19" in the email subject line.

Researchers Submitting Amendments/PAA to Currently Approved, Non-COVID-19 Research

Amendments for currently approved studies need to include the following considerations:

- If your study currently involves direct contact with participants (i.e. interviews, focus-groups), but the method will change to remote/digital distancing methods, an amendment needs to be submitted and the HREB will review.
- Note: If you need to make immediate changes to your research methods, e.g. changing an in-person interview to an online or telephone interview, and will not have time to submit an amendment before engaging with participants, you may make the changes without HREB approval when the change is necessary to eliminate an immediate risk to participants [TCPS 2 (2018) Article 6.15]. The amendment should be submitted as soon as possible to the HREB.

Research Currently Under Review with the HREB Pending/Nearing HREB Ethical Approval:

- The HREB will continue to review new research applications and will work with researchers where changes in method are possible. Please note as COVID-19 research applications will be prioritized, there could be some delays for processing non-COVID 19 applications.

Please be aware that, as the current situation is very fluid, these interim policies may well change, and we will update you as necessary in future bulletins.

If you have any questions, please email Dawn.Pollon@viha.ca or Sarah Bennett at Elizabeth.Bennett@viha.ca and they will respond as soon as they can.

Sincerely,

Crystal White, MA
Co-Chair, Health Research Ethics Board
Crystal.White@viha.ca

Sherri Pooyak, MSW
Co-Chair, Health Research Ethics Board
Sherri.Pooyak@viha.ca