

Annual Report to Senate - Research Ethics Board (2008)

This report covers the period May 1, 2007 to April 30, 2008.

Introduction:

In December 2006, the Research Ethics Board received a site visit from the National Council for Ethics in Human Research (NCEHR), the organization which oversees the implementation of the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Research Conduct for Research Involving Human Subjects (TCPS). One of the recommendations that the NCEHR team made following their visit to Lakehead was that the REB report to Senate on an annual basis. This is the first such report.

The REB is a Senate committee which functions with administrative support from the Office of Research. Its mandate is to apply the TCPS guidelines in reviewing all research at Lakehead University that involves human subjects, and to educate the Lakehead University community about research ethics.

A comprehensive review of the REB's Terms of Reference and Guidelines which had begun in 2005 concluded with Senate's approval of revised versions of these documents in December (see attached). The revisions incorporate suggestions made by the NCEHR site visit team following their visit to Lakehead in December 2006. Their implementation makes Lakehead's REB compliant with TCPS guidelines as they apply to the review of social science and humanities research.

REB Review of Research (2007-08):

The REB reviewed 159 new applications during the period covered by this report. This represents a 16% increase over the preceding year and a 44% increase over the 2005-06 reporting period. These numbers do not include applications for renewal or amendments to ongoing projects.

REB Educational Activities:

The REB participated in information sessions for new faculty and graduate students during Orientation week in September 2007. Information sessions were delivered to the Faculties of Business (faculty and graduate students), Kinesiology (graduate students) and Education (graduate students) during the Fall Semester.

The REB (through the Office of Research) hosted two guest speakers during the year: Marlene Castellano, who discussed The Ethics of Aboriginal Research (February 26); and Shahsi Kant, who delivered a presentation entitled, "The Tragedy of Science" (March 16).

Two members of the REB participated in the NCEHR National Conference in Ottawa, February 16-17, 2008.

Looking Ahead:

The Office of Research has negotiated the purchase of an electronic research office software system from Process Pathways. This will enable the application and review of research proposals to be done online. Implementation of this new system is expected some time during the 2008/09 academic year.

Lakehead University is committed to providing REB services for the Northern Ontario School of Medicine (NOSM). In order to accommodate NOSM, Lakehead's REB will need to dovetail its policies and procedures with those of Laurentian University. A meeting was held in June 2008 involving the Chairs of the REB's at Lakehead and Laurentian as well as administrators from the two universities and NOSM. It was informally agreed that the two REB's (and Offices of Research) would work together to coordinate their activities. The question as to how Lakehead and NOSM can best accommodate clinical trial research remains to be resolved.

A sub-committee of the REB was struck in 2007 to draft a set of guidelines for research involving Aboriginal peoples. The committee is chaired by Dr. P. Smith, AMC representative on the REB and faculty member in the Faculty of Forestry and the Forest Environment, and the committee also includes REB members Dr. R. Maundrell, and Dr. B. Poulin. This committee's work is ongoing. Meanwhile, the research community awaits an updated version of the TCPS which is expected to involve extensive revisions to the section (Chapter 6) which deals specifically with research involving Aboriginal people. Drafting local guidelines and adapting to new policy from NCEHR will be a priority in the year ahead.