Example Questions Used in Protocols: Streamlining the Review Process
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Problem Statement:
The IACUC protocol review process of an animal care and use program can be challenging and time consuming for all involved. Protocol reviewers come from diverse professional backgrounds with varying points of view and priorities. Thusly, there is a certain amount of discord with reviewers’ protocol review questions. Protocol users often find deciphering reviewers’ questions challenging, inconsistent and again, time consuming. Likewise, protocol reviewers find articulating questions a challenge during their protocol review. In order to try and streamline the protocol review process and increase review consistency, Example Questions Used in Protocols (EQUIP) is being developed to provide a formulated list of well-articulated protocol review questions. Reviewers will be able to copy and paste these questions into their protocol review. Thus, EQUIP should improve protocol review consistency and proficiency and therefore will improve the customer experience. EQUIP can also be used as a teaching/training device for new IACUC members, veterinarians and IACUC administrators.

Description of the research:
The question formulary (EQUIP) is comprised of well-articulated, commonly asked protocol questions. These questions are selected based on protocol question frequency. A panel made up of protocol analysts, veterinarian reviewers and IACUC reviewers populate the question formulary. This panel is also tasked with articulating the questions, so they are understandable, clear, and applicable. Questions are then categorized into protocol headers pertaining to Vanderbilt’s protocol form, thereby making it easily searchable. EQUIP does not require any specialized programming and is simply created with standard word-processing software. Upon completion, EQUIP is stored locally in a shared drive to allow access by multiple user groups. Reviewers can then copy and paste an applicable question into the protocol, providing uniformity while speeding up the review process. Additionally, EQUIP will be used to provide metrics regarding which questions are being asked most frequently and thus leading to improved protocol refinements. Finally, to measure the effectiveness of EQUIP, reviewer efficiency will be tracked using protocol turn-around times and survey tools will be used to assess customer satisfaction.

Additional Information:
EQUIP can be a powerful tool at any institution and could be easily adapted to fit each institution’s specific needs. Using this formulary of questions reduces not only question interpretation by the protocol user, but it also helps reviewers to efficiently review a protocol thereby leading to improved customer satisfaction. EQUIP can also be used for training purposes by providing new protocol reviewers an idea of what questions they should be asking and the best way to articulate them. Lastly,
EQUIP can be combined with another emerging Vanderbilt protocol review tool, Text Review & Evaluation of Amazing & Tedious Studies (TREATS), which can be given as an information "packet" to new reviewers and seasoned reviewers alike for continuing education.