Institutional Culture and Implications for IRB Panel Member Recruiting, Retention, Time Management, and Education
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Overview: In 2012, two large university sites collected data from IRB members using a self-evaluation tool developed by these universities. Overall, results related to IRB member satisfactions and challenges, time management, and education were analyzed. The similarities and differences were interpreted through the lens of institutional culture/policies and how culture/policies may affect IRB members’ experiences and preferences. The results provide a snapshot of indicators to consider when creating strategies for targeted recruitment, education, and support of IRB members in their service. The proportion of types of research reviewed by each site was distinctly different: Site 1 reviews 75% social/behavioral science and 25% biomedical research. Site 2 reviews 75% biomedical/clinical and 25% social behavioral science research. Differences and commonalities between sites are highlighted, including IRB policy and procedure differences and how they may affect the culture of IRB Panels. A total of 90 IRB members at the two Association for the Accreditation of Human Research Protection Programs (AAHRPP), Inc. accredited sites provided data for this research. IRB members at the full and alternate levels across six panels (two at the main campus of Site 1 and four at Site 2) were surveyed.

Additional Information: The research was intended to identify satisfactions, challenges, and needs of IRB members to provide data to address how IRB programs can effectively support IRB members in their service. A self-evaluation tool was developed for IRB members, as part of quality improvement efforts at each institution. This particular quality improvement effort grew out of AAHRPP’s emphasis on such activities and a desire to elucidate topics and issues that are important to IRB members. Data collection is continuing at the authoring two institutions. It was observed in the analysis that some of the responses indicated that questions may have been unclear. The tool has been refined based on these observations. To aid in further refinement efforts, feedback from other institutions with whom the instrument has been shared is being solicited. In addition, based on IRB member responses/suggestions offered via the tool, specific educational topics and training have been offered to IRB members.

Next Steps: We would suggest that additional data collection occur across more than one year and possibly at more than the two initial institutions. We would also suggest further refinement of the tool to better gather useful data. Results from annual self-evaluations can be the basis for continually developing and refining institutional strategies for recruiting, supporting, and educating/training IRB members.