**Introduction and Research Questions**

The Translational Health Research Initiative (THRIVE) is a partnership between a university and a regional hospital that serves multiple Native American tribes and other sensitive populations.

This study seeks to find areas of difference and commonality among members of the research community in Northern Arizona with the intention of addressing issues around the responsible conduct of research.

By bringing to light the challenges of cross-cultural, multi-institutional partnerships and working toward finding solutions that are satisfactory to all stakeholders, we hope to improve the way research is conducted and managed in our region.

**Research Questions:**
1. What do diverse research partners perceive as challenges of collaborative research?
2. What do stakeholders in the Northern Arizona research community suggest as possible solutions for these challenges?

**Challenges**

- **Agendas/Expectations** unclear, unstated, or not agreed upon
- **Communication** among and within institutions and organizations
- **Procedures/regulations** not clear, unknown, or cumbersome
- **Data confidentiality, management, and ownership** issues due to differences in institutional policies and failure to comply with procedures and regulations due to lack of knowledge
- **Breaches of confidentiality, COI, and research misconduct** mainly due to lack of knowledge about procedures and regulations
- **Research priorities and dissemination** challenges were due to a disconnect between grant funding and actual needs

**Solutions**

- Build and foster relationships with community members, stakeholders, gatekeepers, and other researchers
- Communicate often and with as many different people as possible, listen with respect and an open mind
- Set clear goals and objectives from the beginning, with methods, roles, and expectations defined and agreed upon by all parties
- Implement training at all stages of research, and on various topics such as cultural sensitivity
- Following a code of ethics that includes sharing results in a positive way that helps the community

**Discussion**

The benefits of conducting collaborative research outweigh the difficulties by providing increased knowledge and resources, and access to different populations of need.

One of THRIVE’s goals is to develop processes and procedures for researchers to follow so that many of the challenges cited can be alleviated. Other activities such as training and frequent meetings also help to minimize research conflicts.

Because it requires transparency and accountability, the nature of collaborative research itself can serve to minimize misconduct.

**How can IRBs help?**

IRBs can address challenges of collaborative research by:

- Cultivating cross-institutional relationships
- Developing guidelines on IRB-of-record roles
- Aligning application and consent forms
- Recruiting board members from partner organizations and the community

Special thanks to Northern Arizona Healthcare for supporting this research. Contact Paula.McAllister@nahealth.com for references and full results.