Research Ethics Committee

Wed 25 November 2020, 14:00 - Wed 25 November 2020, 15:30

Online

Attendees

Board members

John Stevens (Chair), Jonathan Parker, Sam Porter, Chris Chapleo, Jamie Matthews, Andy Mercer, Tanya Le Roux, Liam Wignall, Malika Felton, Natalie Stewart, Suzy Wignall, Sarah Bell

Absent: Donald Gobbett (Deputy Chair), Shamal Faily, Zulfiqar Khan, Angela Turner-Wilson, Paul Lynch

Meeting minutes

1. Welcome & Apologies

John Stevens

Members were welcomed and apologies from absent members noted

2. Conflicts of Interest

John Stevens

No conflicts of interest were reported

3. Minutes of Previous Meeting (29 July 2020)

John Stevens

It was agreed that the minutes were an accurate account of the last meeting

4. Social Sciences & Humanities REP Report

Jonathan Parker

The Panel Chair updated the Committee on the following:

- This academic year has seen the Panel meetings move online as a result of COVID-19, which has resulted in some changes to pre-COVID practice.
- In the November meeting this Panel instituted and trialled the allocation of a main reviewer and second reviewer to each of the checklists. These reviewers took primary responsibility for the review, however, checklists were also sent to all panel members so that additional comments could be made where appropriate. This worked well. Staff undertaking the reviews reported that they appreciated the process, and, from the panel chair perspective, reviews were detailed and comprehensive. The process speeded the meeting and created efficiencies in the review. The Panel will continue this process and review at the end of the academic year.
- COVID-19 has exerted a significant impact on research and on the ethics of research. The majority of submissions address the impact well in the checklists and accompanying documentation. This has also raised the profile of documentary, media and social media research practices and is something the Panel needs to keep in mind as research practice evolves.

5. Science, Technology & Health REP Report

Sam Porter

The Panel Chair updated the Committee on the following:

- The pandemic and response to it has had a considerable detrimental effect on research, though it has been gratifying to see the number of researchers seeking ethical opinion on their transference of data gathering to covid-safe methods.
- Following summer, the first panel meeting took place in November. The format of the meeting was for panel members to meet virtually and discuss applications without requesting the presence of the applicants. Following the meeting, the panel decided that, for the next meeting applicants would be asked to attend virtually to discuss their applications.
- Panel members also discussed whether to adopt SSH REP's allocation of a main reviewer and second reviewer to each of the checklists. It was decided that the panel should continue with the current arrangement of all members reviewing applications.

6. Clinical Governance Standard Operating Procedures (SOPs)

Suzy Wignall

As required under Good Clinical Practice, BU's SOPs had been reviewed and updated where appropriate. Following a brief discussion, the Committee agreed to ratify the revisions on all SOPs presented.

7. Clinical Monitoring Report - Verbal update

Suzy Wignall

S Wignall provided a verbal update:

- Due to Covid-19, clinical monitoring visits were currently postponed.
- There was no further updates in relation to the Human Tissue Licence or the business case for the Clinical Trials Unit.
- Applications to the NHS Ethics Committee continued to be submitted.

8. REC Terms of Reference

Sarah Bell

The Committee had revised the ToR to reduce the number of meetings held during an academic year from 4 to 3.

Following discussions at Senate, it was decided that rather than reduce the number of meetings, the ToR for each sub-committee would be amended to enable flexibility in terms of the frequency of meetings by noting that the usual number of meetings would be expressed as 'normally' [4] allowing the Sub-Committees to meet as often was required to undertake their responsibilities.

Following a brief discussion, the Committee accepted the recommendation and would amend the ToR accordingly.

9. Equality Analysis

Sarah Bell

The Committee were asked to review, discuss and adopt the equality analysis undertaken on the activities of the research ethics panels.

Discussions took place whether the analysis should be expanded beyond the activities of Panel. During deliberations about whether to include applicants in the analysis, it was highlighted that the University had already in wider university policies, the necessary equality analysis in that every academic has 400 hours research time in their contract, therefore, whoever comes to Panel has the same opportunity as anyone else. Based on this, the equality analysis should be conducted on Panel activities and membership.

The Committee approved the equality analysis presented to them but it was agreed that further evaluation would be conducted in terms of fairness, equitable and inclusivity on panel activities and membership.

It was agreed that S Bell would work with the Panel Chairs to take this work forward.

10. External Funding/Gambling Organisations

Sarah Bell

Prof Tim McIntyre-Bhatty had asked the committee to consider the ethical implications of accepting Gambling industry funding for research.

The fact that other HEIs had not signed up was a consideration. Following discussions, it was concluded that signing up to this list carried larger reputational risk than ethical and should be seriously considered by BU's leadership team. Ethical considerations would be dealt within the normal parameters of the ethics review process (i.e. when an ethics checklist is submitted for review as funding is a question it can be discussed by Panel as necessary).

While reaching this point, the Committee did surmise that signing up to the list didn't mean BU had to agree to the research project, merely that we were available to receive funds with a caveat that the project would go through normal processes i.e. pre award (ITB - approved by Faculty Dean / Faculty Exec) and then post award process (which would include an ethics review).

11. Any other Business

The Chair asked whether the Committee meetings were recorded (GDPR).

In the absence of a Committee Clerk, S Bell confirmed that the meetings were recorded for transcription purposes only. Once transcribed, the recordings were deleted.

12. Date of Next Meeting

31 March 2021 @ 2 pm