

MINI REVIEW

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Should a third party know your research submission to institutional ethics committee – a dilemma? **Amit Kumar C Jain**

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**Abstract**

Research studies are now a part of every student and teachers in a medical college and their aim can range from completion of thesis to need for promotion. Irrespective of the purpose, studies, especially prospective types done on human or animals often require approval from institutional ethics committee and it's considered today to be mandatory. However during the course of submission of research proposal, is it right for others to know your research? This article throws a highlight on this dilemma.

Keywords: Research, ethics, committee

Introduction

Institutional research committees are today mandatory in every medical college and their role includes approval of research on humans and animals. Before conducting any study or thesis, it is important to get approval from Institutional Ethics Committee [1]. Often, they also suppose to monitor the progress of the study [2]. Most of us have to fill the research proposal form, and duly sign it. This proposal form consists of data's related to your study including the title, investigators name, etc.

Although, the two parties, which include the team conducting the research and the Ethics committee will know about the conduct of the study, is it right and ethical for a third party to know the research proposal prior to the commencement of the research. The third party here is a person or persons apart from the two people who are involved in a particular situation. The answer to this should be "NO".

For a student thesis, it can be acceptable, as he requires a document that needs to be submitted to university for his course completion and requires signature of guides, Head of the Department, Dean,

etc. But in ordinary course, when a faculty or a group of people decide to conduct a study, then why should a third party know about the research proposal.

This dilemma came when one day, I was reading in library and suddenly a colleague from another department happens to meet me. After sharing a few well wishing and day to day activities, a question by the colleague disturb my mind. The person ask "It seems you are doing a randomized study in diabetic foot on..., How did you get that conceptual idea...". I could not stop to immediately ask, how did you know (with a smile definitely). She said everyone knows in her department which is a non clinical department. I did give a wider smile and still posed the same question asking her to tell how she got the information.

As a known colleague who bumps in frequently, she obliged and said she saw in her departmental notice. I was completely perplexed. How could a clinical research of a surgeon that is not yet started, is known by a non clinical department. And then I restarted my homework as to how does third party's got to know my research proposal even before I started my study. Knowledge of the study proposal conducted by responsible faculty, which sometimes could be a delicate one, by the third parties is wrong. After approval of the study and in some cases after completion, if people gets to know then there shouldn't be a issue since ethics committee has cleared the proposal. Just imagine a person is doing a study "Timing of arrival and delays by teachers in a medical college" or "Analysis of washing hands before seeing next patients among

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surgeons”, etc are highly sensitive and if third party gets to know it, then the results of these study would not be true. It indirectly affects the researcher who wants to know the true outcomes and habits. This is why it is a delicate issue if research proposals are known by third parties.

As a researcher, I strongly recommended that every Institution /hospital should stop the following procedures (Table 1) that is responsible for third party knowledge of a research that is yet to be commenced.

Table 1. What should not be done when submitting research proposal

1	As a faculty, one should not run for taking approvals from HOD's, Medical Superintendent, Dean, Director, etc. In most universities guidelines, a faculty should have requisite number of research paper for their own academic growth. Often, running for signing the approval from many authorities in fact can bias your study results, can lead to many other third parties knowing or even you will be discouraged to do a study or they will start forcing you for gift authorship, which is not ethical and acceptable in researches.
2	You or your co investigator should not discuss with other colleagues in your department or other department.
3	Ensure your Institutional ethics committee informs you your presentation date through email. If they have a habit of sending circular of your research to other departments, then it should be stopped by ethics committee. Discuss this with the member secretary and others in committee about sensitiveness of your study
4	Make sure your proposal is not released in whatsapp group or other media's of college
5	Your approval letter also should be directly collected by you or the other investigator and not a helper in your department

Conclusion

Since the research proposal is submitted to ethics committee hasn't undergone a review and its acceptance or modification is still unknown, and further even if the research has been approved by the committee, if your study or its results can be influenced, then the third party shouldn't know your research proposal or the study until its completed.

Conflict of interests

The authors declare that they have no competing interests.

Financial Disclosure

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