

JERHRE NOTES

Skills for Solving Ethical Problems in Human Research

Who is Evaluating the Ethics Committee?

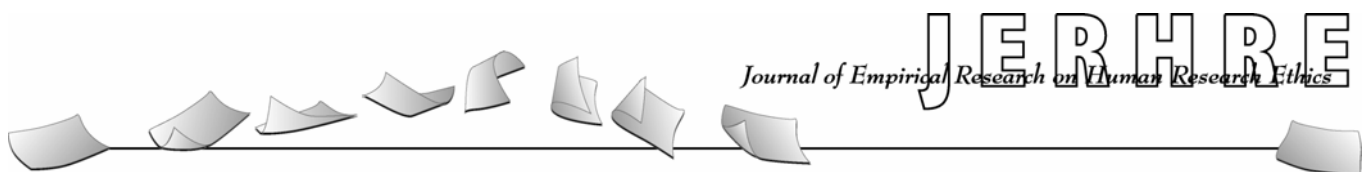
When federally funded biomedical and social/behavioral scientists rated the importance of 45 descriptors of their IRBs using the IRB Researcher Assessment Tool (RAT), their rating was assumed to reflect the perception of *any* key member of the research team (Keith-Spiegel, et al, 2006). But when Reeser, et al (2008) asked investigators and research coordinators at a single biomedical research institution to rate their IRB, a different picture emerged:

- There were substantial role-dependent differences in evaluation of both the relative importance of IRB characteristics of the ideal IRB, and the extent to which their own IRB achieved that ideal. Apparently, one's role in the research enterprise significantly determines one's experience and perception of the quality of the IRB.
- The relative ranking of the 45 items differed significantly from the ranking found in the national study.
- Research coordinators and the PIs who had served on the IRB were more critical of the IRB than PIs without prior IRB service.

Research coordinators buffer PIs from interaction with the IRB, and must satisfy the demands of investigators, IRB, subjects and sponsors. Reeser's findings, based on one biomedical research institution, may not be representative and call for replication. However, the notion of role dependence of perception is too logical to ignore, and apparently those more closely associated with IRB processes are more critical.

Reeser, J., et al. (2008). Investigating perceived IRB quality and function using the IRB Researcher Assessment Tool. *JERHRE*, 3(1), 25-34.

Keith-Spiegel, P., Koocher, G. P., & Tabachnick, B. (2006). What scientists want from their ethics committee. *JERHRE*, 1(1), 67-81.



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