

March 19<sup>th</sup>, 2020

### **COVID-19 Update: Suggested Actions for Currently Approved Research Involving Humans**

Given the evolving circumstances with COVID19 Western's Research Ethics Boards (REB) encourage all researchers with active protocols to **evaluate** the necessity of ongoing study activities at this time, and **if needed**, to make *appropriate* (and applicable) revisions to their study in response to Public Health Ontario recommendations until further notice – maintaining compliance to all institutional, provincial and federal guidelines.

The PI on the application is responsible for exercising sound judgment in determining when ongoing study activities are appropriate, taking into consideration: (a) the objective of the research; (b) the mandate to protect all participants, research staff and the community at large; and (c) the resources available (e.g., access to study sites, personnel, technologies, etc.) to carry out ongoing activities.

1. Are ongoing study activities essential at this time?
2. If 'yes', what study activities must continue?
3. Are any modifications to approved study procedures needed to responsibly carry out these activities?
4. If 'yes', will these modifications increase any risk to participants, researchers, the community at large or the institution?
5. If 'yes', what steps will be implemented to minimize risk to all involved?

Western's REBs recognize the with a wide range of research across campus will necessitate diverse modifications to facilitate research activities during this time.

Below are some technologies Western makes available which may help facilitate social distancing and minimize travel to campus and face-to-face interactions, while still allowing research teams to communicate with each other and with participants as needed.

- Consent modifications: verbal consent via telephone (required: verbal script and evidence of documented consent such as via audio-recording); written consent received via email attachment; online consent via Qualtrics ([mysurveys.uwo.ca](https://mysurveys.uwo.ca)).
- Videoconferencing options: Western [Zoom](#) and hospital [options](#)
- Office 365 Suite: deemed secure for collection, transfer, storage of [sensitive information](#) (e.g., de-identified research data)

As per the [Memo](#) sent on March 13, 2020, researchers must report these modifications to the REB within 5 days of implementing the change \*if not possible to do so before\*. These reports must be submitted as a Reportable Event in WREM (see Actions: "Create Sub-Form"), selecting "For Your Information (FYI)" in Q1.8 of the application form.

You must go into WREM and use the correspondence feature to message the specific ethics officer assigned to your file to efficiently communicate with the REB about your own individual studies. It will be much faster and the most efficient way to ensure your message gets to the most appropriate person. The messages go right to the email for the EO assigned to the file.

Sincerely,



Ms. Erika Basile, Director, Research Ethics and Compliance, Western University