

## **REC Activity Report 2009**

### **Committee Membership**

In the period of activity from January to December 2009, there has been one retirement, and one new appointment:

Current Members:

- Mr. Brian Trench (Chair until Sept 2009)
- Dr. Donal O'Mathuna (Vice-Chair, then Chair)
- Dr. Donal O'Gorman (Vice-Chair from Nov 2009)
- Dr. Declan Raftery (Secretary)
- Ms. Fiona Brennan (Rapporteur)
- Dr. Mary Shine-Thompson
- Dr. Peter Nowlan
- Ms. Chanel Watson
- Mr. Deiric O'Broin
- Dr. Gabriel Flynn
- Dr. Finbarr O'Sullivan
- Dr. Michael Parkinson
- Dr. Noelle Higgins
- Mr. Vincent Lynch
- Dr. Bert Gordijn
- Ms. Melissa Stobie (appointed July 2009)

Retired Members:

- Ms. Cathy Fowley (March 2009)

Mr. Brian Trench stepped down as REC Chair, having held the role since 2004. His contribution to the work of the REC was acknowledged by the committee, and he was congratulated on his enthusiasm and commitment to generating greater ethical awareness in the university. He was succeeded by the former Vice-Chair, Dr. Donal O'Mathuna. The vacant Vice-Chair post was subsequently taken up by Dr. Donal O'Gorman

### **Meetings**

The full committee met six times during the period in question. In addition, a subcommittee comprised of the REC Chair, Vice Chair, Secretary and Rapporteur met between full meetings to discuss procedural issues.

### **Ethical Reviews**

The REC processed 187 applications for ethical review. Full committee review was required for 15 of those applications, 55 were processed by expedited review, 114 were processed via the notification procedure and the remainder were noted by the REC (already approved by an external REC).

### **Procedures**

The following procedural adjustments were made:

- Incorporation of a conflict of interest question within the existing REC application forms

- It was decided that documentation emerging from both the Nursing Ethics Advisory Committee and the Animal Ethics Review Committee should be attached to the REC application. This will ensure that the REC is aware of discipline specific/technical queries raised with the researcher in advance of submission to the REC.
- It was decided that research ethics advisers should have a standing invitation to attend all future REC meetings.
- Links to online ethics resources were circulated to the Research Ethics Advisers, along with a link to an NIH training course which focuses on issues arising with research involving human participants.

## **Ethical Awareness**

A seminar by Prof. Charles L Bosk on research ethics was hosted by the Royal Irish Academy on the 21<sup>st</sup> January 2009. The seminar provided an excellent opportunity to network with ethics committee members from other institutions. Prof. Bosk visited DCU earlier that day to discuss his work with interested researchers. The REC thanked Dr. Donal O'Mathuna for his efforts in organising these events.

An REC workshop on Replacing, Refining and Reducing Animal Research took place in November 2009. The guest speaker was Tim Watson, Communication Officer for NC3R's, who discussed the work of the National Centre for the 3R's in the UK. This meeting was open to Research Ethics Committee members in other universities, in addition to the DCU research community.

## **Future Work**

- The REC will expand on the current documentation relating to the role of the advisers. In order to assist them in promoting good ethical practice at a local level, the REC will work with the advisers to devise additional protocols where required. Previous REC applications could be used as case studies, giving real-life examples to applicants.
- An REC User Survey will be devised and made available on the website
- Further streamlining of procedures between the REC and other review groups in DCU (Nursing Ethics Advisory Committee and the Animal Ethics Research Committee)