

**Sample nursing research policy**

**Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center  
Lebanon, New Hampshire  
Office of Professional Nursing**

**GUIDELINES FOR REVIEW OF  
RESEARCH PROPOSALS INVOLVING NURSES**

Research involving nurses in roles as investigators, subjects, care givers, or data collectors must be reviewed by the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS), the institutional review board for DHMC. Prior to submission to the CPHS, all research proposals must undergo scientific review by a departmental research group or other designated authority.

The Office of Professional Nursing conducts the departmental scientific review for nurse investigators or for studies where the subjects are DHMC nurses. Nurse investigators may elect to go through the research committees of departments of Dartmouth Medical School if they desire. It is the objective of the Nursing Research Office to assist nurse investigators with the research proposal development and approval process.

Nurse Researchers must either be employees of DHMC or Dartmouth College or collaborate with a researcher who meets the employment criteria of CPHS.

To initiate the steps of the review process in the Office of Professional Nursing, the investigator contacts the Nursing Research Coordinator.

**I. Departmental Scientific Review (Nursing)**

- A. Investigators are encouraged to contact the Director of Nursing Research or the Nursing Research Coordinator in the early stages of proposal development. A copy of the guidelines for the scientific and administrative review process will be provided and time frames for accomplishing the review within investigator deadlines will be discussed.
- B. Investigator presents four copies of the research proposal, an abstract of the proposal following the format required by the CPHS and a copy of the CPHS cover sheet to the Nursing Research Coordinator. The proposal should include
  1. Background information sufficient to establish the significance of studying this problem.
  2. Description of the problem and objectives of the study.
  3. Description of research plan: sample selection, instruments, procedures.
  4. Projected plan for analysis and interpretation of data.
  5. Consent forms where appropriate.
  6. Data collection instruments, questionnaires, and cover letters where appropriate. (Should be attached to proposal.)
  7. Estimate of numbers of patients/staff to be involved.
  8. Estimate of time per subject and total staff nurse time involved.
  9. A letter of support from the Director(s) (or designee) of the department(s) involved.
  10. Time frame for conduct of study.

11. Potential implications of study for nursing practice.
12. Plan for communicating final report.

- C. If a proposal is being submitted by a student, a letter from the faculty member who is the primary advisor on the project must accompany the proposal submission. The letter must identify how the faculty member can be reached by letter and by telephone and must contain the faculty member's endorsement of the project.
- D. The proposal will be reviewed within 10 days of submission by three nurses selected by the Nursing Research Coordinator.

Reviewers will be master's-prepared nurses selected from the following groups in order of priority:

1. Clinical Nurse Specialist, if study falls within area of expertise.
2. Nursing Director if study would be conducted on units for which they are administratively responsible.
3. Other master's (or doctorally) prepared nurses within DHMC whose area of research or clinical expertise would qualify them to review the proposal.

- E. Reviewers will complete the Scientific Review of Research Proposal forms, or, if appropriate, the Administrative Review of Research Proposals, and return them to the Nursing Research Coordinator. Approval of research proposals will be dependent on the following criteria:

1. The problem is relevant and timely.
2. The research design is appropriate and logical.
3. The rights and safety of patients and staff have been adequately safeguarded.
4. There is potential benefit to patients, staff, or the nursing profession.
5. The study will not interfere with or compromise existing programs of care.
6. The study is feasible in terms of staff time, space, and/or materials required.
7. There is a plan to share the study results with the nursing staff and appropriate others.

- F. The outcomes of the review for scientific merit will result in one of the following actions:

1. Full approval
2. Approval pending review of revisions.
3. Recommendation of revisions of study plan to enhance protection of human subjects, scientific merit, and feasibility.

The Nursing Research Coordinator will assist the investigator in addressing any revision requested by the review panel. Once any outstanding questions have been addressed, the Director of Nursing Research will sign the CPHS coversheet. The proposal will be returned to the investigator after the signature of approval from the Director of Nursing Research has been obtained. Allow 10 to 14 days for the review process.

## II. Human Subjects Review

- A. The Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (CPHS) is the institutional review board at DHMC. Investigators

**Sample nursing research policy (cont.)**

should contact the IRB Administrator to obtain the most recent versions of the CPHS cover sheet and informed consent forms. Forms are also available on the CPHS Web page.

- B. After the research proposal has been approved by the Office of Professional Nursing, it is the responsibility of the investigator to submit the research proposal to the Committee for the Protection of Human Subjects (DHMC use: CPHS mailbox in mailroom).
- C. Data collection may begin when the investigator submits the letter of approval from the CPHS to the Nursing Research Coordinator's office, and the letter of approval with a copy of the proposal to the directors of any units on which the study will take place.
- D. It is the responsibility of the investigator to keep the Office of Professional Nursing apprised of the status of the study including submissions of copies of the CPHS Annual Renewal and Termination forms.

**III. When the investigator is also a student**

- A. When doing a research project as part of an academic requirement, the student is responsible for meeting the often different criteria set by both his or her school and DHMC. It is advisable to contact the Nursing Research Coordinator early in the process of proposal development for guidance in understanding the standards used for evaluating research proposals at DHMC.
- B. The student should be aware of the time requirements of the review process and allow for possible revisions.

*Source: Dartmouth-Hitchcock Medical Center. Used with permission.*

The council may decide that its initial work effort will focus on making policies and procedures evidence-based. This can be a great place to start, as it helps embed evidence in the care nurses provide each day. In addition, policies and procedures are clinically relevant and can transform research findings into practice. If an organization is considering pursuing MRP designation, this focus will help in those efforts by ensuring that policies and standards of care incorporate research findings and evidence-based guidelines. Once policies and procedures have been revised, the council also could conduct clinical evaluations and assess the effectiveness of practice changes. In this way, quality indicators and outcomes can be linked to evidence-based practice.