

“As a bioethicist, I have been consistently impressed with the depth of ethics expertise and reflection that the IRB has brought to bear on complex and cutting-edge issues. The UI IRB does an outstanding job of navigating the rapidly evolving regulations and guidance in this arena with a calm and steady hand.”

*CHRISTLAN SIMON, Ph.D., PROGRAM IN  
BIOETHICS AND HUMANITIES  
DEPARTMENT OF INTERNAL MEDICINE AND  
DEPARTMENT OF ANTHROPOLOGY*

INSTITUTIONAL  
REVIEW BOARDS:

# Ensuring Participant Safety Through an Ethical Review Process



Institutional Review Board  
Human Subjects Office



“I see my role as being an advocate for the potential subject, making sure that what they are asked to do is reasonable and that the explanation of the research is understandable. While I rely on my medical and scientific colleagues to determine if the project is ‘good science,’ I have never been made to feel that my opinion is any less valuable.”

*NANCY GOLDSMITH  
NON-SCIENTIST IRB MEMBER*

University of Iowa researchers often rely on human subjects to participate in studies about measures, medicines and devices that may improve quality of life and prevent and treat a wide range of diseases and conditions. Ensuring the safety and ethical treatment of those subjects is the role of the Institutional Review Board (IRB), administratively supported by the Human Subjects Office (HSO).

**The IRB reviews all research involving humans conducted by UI faculty, staff and students to protect the rights, safety, and welfare of research subjects, and to ensure that research activities comply with federal, state, and institutional regulations and policies.**



# What is an IRB?

Four Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) with more than 60 members serve the University of Iowa and the Veterans Administration Health Care System in Iowa City, based on the type of research, funding source and where it is conducted. These IRBs specialize in the review of:

- Biomedical research
- Social and behavioral research
- Veterans Administration research
- Department of Defense research

## Support University of Iowa Research: Become an IRB Member

IRB members have a front-row seat to see the wide variety of research conducted at the university, from Alzheimer's and diabetes to early childhood development and driver safety. The UI conducts more than 3,500 research studies involving human subjects at any time during the year. IRB members support the University of Iowa Human Research Protection Program and, by extension society, by reviewing proposals for such research to further scientific knowledge.

The Human Subjects Office seeks balanced IRBs made up not only of UI faculty and staff, but members of the Iowa City and surrounding area—including people with scientific and non-scientific backgrounds and people from outside the university. Unaffiliated community members and non-scientists play a crucial role in assessing studies involving human subjects and bring fresh insight and perspective to the review process. No particular experience is necessary. Community members may include clergy, public servants (police officers, fire fighters) and others.

### To qualify as a community or non-scientific member, applicants:

- And their immediate family must not be employed by the UI or VA
- Should have a non-scientific background or training (preferred)
- Must have the ability to attend regular review meetings (once or twice a month)
- Should have interest in and general aptitude for reviewing research proposals prior to IRB meetings
- Must complete IRB member training

The UI was the first academic institution to achieve accreditation for the IRB, HSO, and the Human Research Protection Program. Learn more about the UI Institutional Review Boards at <http://hso.research.uiowa.edu/>



# Why Research—and Institutional Review Board Oversight—Matter

**For more information, and to apply, contact the Director of the Human Subjects Office in one of the following ways:**

Phone: 319-335-6564

Email: [irb@uiowa.edu](mailto:irb@uiowa.edu)

Web: <http://hso.research.uiowa.edu/become-IRB-member>

Human Subjects Office/IRB  
Hardin Library, Office 105  
600 Newton Road  
Iowa City, IA 52242-1098



- Given that 6,400 Iowans will die of cancer this year, it's rewarding to know that more than 300 cancer research studies are currently being conducted at the UI.
- At every meeting, IRB members review research proposals on a wide variety of topics, including pediatric and adult cancer treatment and prevention, glaucoma and postpartum depression.
- UI researchers are conducting innovative research on the treatment and prevention of many different kinds of cancer including lung cancer, the most common cancer diagnosis for Iowans.
- IRB members hear about the wide variety of research conducted on campus, including research about the prevention, detection and treatment of major mental illnesses, including anxiety, mood, personality and substance abuse disorders.
- IRB members learn first-hand about treatment and prevention research for a wide variety of diseases, including various types of cancer.
- In the social science disciplines, UI researchers study injury prevention, healthcare access and disaster response in rural/agricultural communities across the state.

“As a community member my primary task has been to help determine that the information and consents given to participants in clinical trials are accurate and understandable to persons who do not have medical training. As a bonus, I have learned a great deal about human research and new medical advances.”

*DAVE SCHULTZ, IRB COMMUNITY MEMBER*

