SEARCH MOP - Section 2
General Research Guidelines
Table of Contents

2. General Research Guidelines

2.1. HUMAN SUBJECTS INFORMATION

SEARCH investigators will comply with federal regulations governing human subject research as outlined in the Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) Title 45 Part 46. Since SEARCH 3 will register and attempt to recruit all cases of diabetes in young people <20 years of age, regulations of Subpart D, Additional DHHS Protections for Children Involved as Subjects in Research, will be followed.

2.1.1. *HIPAA Privacy Act*

The Office of Civil Rights has established a Privacy Rule for research, OCR Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) Privacy TA.5121.001. The Privacy Rule establishes conditions under which protected health information may be used or disclosed for research purposes. The Privacy Rule protects an individual's identifiable health information while allowing for the conduct of vital research, with researchers accessing necessary medical information. The means of informing individuals of use or disclosure of medical information are also defined in the Privacy Rule. SEARCH centers will comply with HIPAA guidelines contingent on the interpretations and processes defined by the local Institutional Review Boards (IRBs) and Privacy Boards. As an added protection for the privacy of study participants, SEARCH investigators will have a renewed Certificate of Confidentiality from the Department of Health and Human Services that was received previously obtained in SEARCH 1 and 2.

2.1.2. *Informed Consent*

2.1.2.1. Overview

The success of every research study depends on full disclosure of study processes to its participants in order to ensure informed participation. To meet SEARCH study objectives, *informed consent* and in many instances – *assent* -must be obtained. Obtaining informed consent is the responsibility of the study team and should be an ongoing process throughout the course of the study. If the consent process were to be simply a mechanical ritual, participation and retention of study participants might be jeopardized.

45 CFR 46.116 "General Requirements for Informed Consent" states:

- *No investigator may involve a human being as a subject in research unless the investigator has obtained the legally effective informed consent of the subject or the subject's*

legally authorized representative. An investigator shall seek such consent only under circumstances that provide the prospective subject or the representative sufficient opportunity to consider whether or not to participate and that minimize the possibility of coercion or undue influence.

- *The information that is given to the subject or the representative shall be in language understandable to the subject or the representative.*
- *No informed consent, whether oral or written, may include any exculpatory language through which the subject or the representative is made to waive or appear to waive any of the subject's legal rights or releases or appears to release.*

2.1.2.2. Basic Elements of Informed Consent

While each IRB maintains specific policies relating to informed consent, there are eight basic elements that should be included in both the written informed consent documents and the verbal communications between study staff and study participants:

- A statement that the procedures are for research, an explanation of the purposes of the research, the expected duration of the participant's involvement, a description of the procedures to be followed, and identification of any experimental procedures;
- A description of any reasonable foreseeable risks or discomforts to the participant;
- A description of any benefits to the participants or to others that may be reasonably expected from the research;
- A disclosure of appropriate alternative procedures or courses of treatment, if any, that might be advantageous to the participant;
- A statement describing the extent, if any, to which confidentiality of records identifying the participant will be maintained; the data collected from this study will be maintained by a Coordinating Center; a central Laboratory will process and store all specimens;
- For research involving more than minimal risk, an explanation as to whether compensation and medical treatments are available if any injury occurs, and,

if so, what these treatments may consist of and where further information on these treatments can be found;

- An explanation of whom to contact for answers to pertinent questions about the research and research participant's rights, and whom to contact in the event of research-related injury to the participant; and

- A statement that participation is voluntary and that refusal to participate will involve no penalty or loss of benefits to which the individual is otherwise entitled. Additionally, the participant may discontinue participation at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which they are otherwise entitled.

When appropriate, the following additional elements will be included in the consent document:

- A statement that the particular treatment or procedure may involve currently unforeseen risks to the participant;

- Anticipated circumstances under which the individual's participation may be terminated by the investigator without regard to the participant's consent;

- Any additional costs to the participant that may result from participation in the research;

- The consequences of a participant's decision to withdraw from the research, and procedures for orderly termination of participation;

- A statement that significant new findings developed during the course of the research that may relate to the participant's willingness to continue participation will be provided; and

- The approximate number of participants involved in the study.

SEARCH study participants should have a clear understanding of what this study makes available to them, e.g., laboratory testing that might not be part of their usual diabetes care. Conversely, there may be certain levels of discomfort or burden associated with the physical exam, specimen collection, or completion of survey questions.

Informed consent shall be documented as specified by the local IRB. The process of obtaining informed consent may vary depending on the participant's level of participation in SEARCH (e.g., a participant whose participation is limited to the IPS may consent via verbal consent). For participants taking part in an in-person visit,

informed consent shall be documented by the use of a written consent form approved by the IRB and signed by the subject or the subject's legally authorized representative. A copy shall be given to the person signing the form.

2.1.2.3. Non-English Speaking Participants

- Informed consent documents should be available in a language spoken by non-English speaking participants/parents/legal guardians, and will include all of the basic essential elements described above (2.1.1.2.);
- Alternative consenting processes for non-English speaking participants will be site-specific per local IRB requirement.

2.2. RESEARCH WITH CHILDREN

While IRBs are concerned with protecting the rights of all research participants, the vulnerability of children makes consideration of them as research participants particularly important. In consideration of this, Title 45 CFR Part 46, Subpart D provides for "Additional Protections for Children Involved as Subjects of Research."

Obtaining adult consent for the child's participation in research may not be sufficient. Given that children have not reached their full intellectual and emotional capacities and are legally unable to give valid consent, parental or guardian permission is required. While children may be legally incapable of giving informed consent, they may possess the ability to *assent*[1] to or *dissent* from participation. In general, out of respect for children as developing persons, they should be asked whether or not they wish to participate in the research, and their wishes should be honored. The specific process for and age of assent shall be determined by individual IRB requirements.

2.3. GUIDELINES TO INTERACTING WITH STUDY PARTICIPANTS

Section 3 of the SEARCH Manual of Procedures provides an in-depth guide to interviewing. The following section provides an overview of interacting with study participants.

2.3.1. *The Role of the Study Staff*

Study investigators and staff play an integral role in setting the tone of the participant's involvement in SEARCH. Study personnel should establish and maintain a positive rapport with the participant in order to ensure the willingness of the participant to remain in the study.

[1] Assent can be defined at the child's affirmative agreement to participate in research.

Once rapport is established and the participant indicates a willingness to participate in the study, the interviewer should attempt to maintain a positive rapport while asking study questions in a way that does not overly influence the participant's perception or response to a question. Here are some methods that can enhance the neutrality of the interview:

- Utilization of structured or scripted interviews or instructions that provide specific information and assure limited interviewer bias;
- Monitoring one's own non-verbal and verbal responses that may influence a participant's response;
- Conveying a sense of impartiality that does not impose judgment on the participant's response;
- Maintenance of a professional appearance, dress and speech;
- Maintaining a pleasant and friendly attitude, to place the respondent at ease.

2.3.2. *The Study Visit Environment*

In order to maintain the privacy and confidentiality of the data collection, the visit should be conducted in a quiet, private area free from interruption.

2.3.3. *Questionnaire Data Collection*

Most SEARCH questionnaires are designed to be collected via self-administration (with assistance from staff as needed). However, in the Registry study visit, the Medication Inventory should be completed by interview. In the Cohort study visit, the Family Medical History form should be completed by interview. When interviewing, the study staff person should attempt to determine a comfortable pace for the participant. Instructions and questions should be read as written. If the participant does not respond, the question should be repeated.

While scripted interviews reduce the potential of interviewer bias, it is occasionally necessary to prompt respondents or probe for additional information. Additionally, the developmental age of the child and cultural variation may require elements of prompting to elicit a response. Methods of prompting should be driven by the age and needs of the respondent.

Remember that the balance between probing and directing responses is a difficult one to maintain. The interviewer should be certain that they are merely eliciting *clarification* and not pushing or coercing a participant to respond in a particular manner. It is important that the interviewer be able to assess when probing should stop. The participant should not perceive themselves as ignorant or feel their responses are inadequate.

The interviewer should record all responses by clearly marking the appropriate category(ies) and not overlapping between categories. Additional information about interviewing techniques and questionnaire data collection can be found in Section 3 of the MOP.

2.3.4. *Confidentiality*

Participants must be assured that confidentiality will be maintained throughout the study. Westat (1987) noted:

> *"An interview must often ask questions that one would not think of asking even a close friend. Most people, however, are willing to answer such questions when they are asked in an interview. They are willing to give information because they trust that it will be used only for serious purposes. Your protection of all information about subjects gained during the conduct of research is therefore essential. This means to protect not only the information you get in direct answer to the questions you ask in an interview, but also the information you gather through incidental observation of the participant.*
>
> *It is important that care be taken in maintaining confidentiality of completed questionnaires while in your possession. Always make sure that questionnaires are not left where non-research staff can view them. You must safeguard the completed questionnaires by not leaving them unattended, such as in your car where they might be stolen, or in a schoolroom, clinic room or office where anyone could walk in and read them.*
>
> *It is your duty to keep the promise of confidentiality. Never divulge names or tell facts about or reveal the opinions of anyone you interview.*
>
> *Information collected or seen during an interview can be shared only with the research team, whose members are under the same ethical or moral obligation as you are to the people interviewed. As you may know, persons who participate in research studies have rights to privacy that are protected by federal law. Maintaining confidentiality of data is not just a philosophical issue for an interviewer. It means that an interviewer must be aware of the importance of protecting the confidences of the study subjects on a day-to-day basis. For example, a comment to a friend outside of the research team about a particular subject or subject's response is a breach of confidentiality, violates the HIPAA Privacy Act, and is unprofessional conduct as an interviewer."*

2.4. TECHNIQUES FOR COMPLETING STUDY FORMS

The goal of data management activities is to provide high quality data. In order to maintain data quality, accurate completion of study forms and data entry is essential. Most issues of form completion are common sense, but the importance warrants attention.

For data collected on paper, an important issue is to complete the forms neatly so data entry personnel can accurately enter the information. Be aware that numerals 1, 2, and 7 are the most often confused.

- Develop habits of making clear strokes at the bottom of a "2" (that would distinguish it from a "7").
- Refrain from making downward strokes at the top of a "1" that could confuse it with a "7."
- If mistakes are made, mark through the incorrect response with a single line, record and circle the correct response. Place your initials next to the correct response.
- Forms should be completed using a pen, preferably with black ink.
- Review completed forms for accuracy.

Participants may also elect to complete data collection forms before, during, or after the in-person visit. If the participant chooses to complete the forms at a time other than at the visit, the questionnaires will be mailed to the participant with clear instructions about completion.

For more specific guidance on issues related to self-administered questionnaires see Section 3.6.