Report of the Faculty Senate Committee on IRB Relations

Spring, 2012

The committee has met three times. Drs. Moore, Ogle, Elgazzar, and Gann prepared this report. On one occasion, Drs. Duncan and Youngberg came as guests. Dr. Hamdy was present at an initial meeting, but is not a contributor to this report. Dr. Gann served as facilitator.

The committee addressed the following issues:

* Relations with MHSA
* Length of time for proposal approval and possible remedies
* Student research and IRB approval time frame
* Consistency in what researchers are told by IRB personnel
* General tone of IRB/ faculty relations

We wish to say at the outset that we respect the hard work of the IRB. Dr. Duncan has been most available to us and very willing to address our concerns.

Relations with MHSA are a continuing problem. The required sequential submission of research proposals to both the IRB and MHSA is cumbersome. The ensuing delays have cost researchers grants. Dr. Duncan is hoping that a streamlined process in which MHSA does administrative reviews only will alleviate this problem. However, none of us has worked with the new procedures yet. While it may be beyond the scope of this committee, there is a concern that MHSA negotiates separate contracts with various colleges and departments, and there is disparity in charges. The committee believes there would be value in uniformity.

There is continuing frustration with the length of time it takes for proposals to be cleared by the IRB. Researchers and IRB personnel view review time frames differently. From the perspective of research faculty, review time begins with proposal submission and extends until approval. On the other hand, IRB personnel look at the time it takes for a fully vetted and amended proposal to clear the system. As faculty members, we find the former perspective more relevant, and we see a need for streamlining of procedures.

Especially on the medical IRB, there is apt to be back-up on proposal review. We suggest that meetings occur more often, twice monthly perhaps. The committee could be enlarged to assure quorums. Individual members would then attend only monthly and be chosen for special interests or expertise.

We believe that approval time for student research requires special scrutiny. When approval time for a study is protracted, the student may not have time to carry it out. It should be noted that we are first and foremost a teaching university.

We consider it particularly important that IRB personnel be consistent when offering information about requirements and procedures. No researcher should be hit with additional requirements right before expected approval. Relevant parties should be informed when regulations change and adequate time (at least two months) given for compliance.

 Again, we commend the efforts of the IRB in insuring compliance with AHARP and Federal guidelines. But we regret the tone of some communications from the IRB. Faculty should feel supported by the IRB; all too often, the IRB functions in an adversarial role. There should be recognition that researchers and IRB personnel share common goals of institutional excellence. A first rate university respects its researchers and helps them comply with regulations that exist to assure the integrity of the academic enterprise and the well-being of research subjects.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Mohammed Elgazzar (Internal Medicine)

Dr. Rosalind Gann, Subcommittee Chair (Curriculum and Instruction)

Dr. Norman Moore (Psychiatry)

Dr. Brian Odle (Pharmacy Practice)