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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S COLUMN



The IRB Problem: A Call to Arms

by: Steven Breckler, Executive Director for Science

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Exactly one year ago, I used the space in this column to discuss the [problem with IRBs](#) – the frenzy building over the behavior of many Institutional Review Boards. I pointed out that we know remarkably little about the structure and function of IRBs, and reinforced the need for more data. I pointed to recent thoughtful discussions of the problem, and suggested that we need to take ownership of IRBs and get University administrations to understand that the success of their faculty depend on well-functioning IRBs.

Time to Take Action

I think we still do not have a good handle on the problem. We have plenty of symptoms, but still a poor understanding of the causes and what to do about them. We can, however, begin to take action.

APA is ramping up its own efforts. Next month's Science Leadership Conference (<http://www.apa.org/science/scilc.html>) will include a plenary session devoted to recent perspectives on IRBs, including the Illinois White Paper (<http://www.law.uiuc.edu/conferences/whitepaper/>) and a very recent report from the American Association of University Professors (AAUP)

PSA Notice

With the 2nd Annual APA Science Leadership Conference (SciLC) fast approaching, the Science Directorate staff is deep in preparation mode. Consequently, this issue of Psychological Science Agenda is modest in size, including Executive Director Steve Breckler's regular column as well as announcements about a variety of opportunities.

December's PSA will be back with our regular features, plus coverage of the SciLC.

(<http://www.aaup.org/AAUP/pubsres/academe/2006/SO/Rep/ResearchonHumanSubjects.htm>). APA President-Elect Sharon Brehm has also appointed an APA task force to make recommendations for action.

In the meantime, I think we need to begin a more active grassroots effort to focus our collective attention on understanding and solving the problem.

What Action?

First, we need to start documenting best

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and worst practices. If the IRB at your institution is, in your view, an especially good or bad one, let me know. Send me an email at sbreckler@apa.org, describing what you like or don't like about your IRB. Of particular interest are cases in which federally-funded research is being delayed because an IRB is challenging the scientific merit of the project.

Second, force the issue at the local level. Form a work group or committee at your institution, and investigate the structure and functioning of your IRB.

- 2 Who appoints its members? What autonomy is the IRB given? Does the Dean or Provost have any control, or take any interest, in the functioning of the IRB? Let your administration know that you are sick and tired of the IRB problem, and that you are not going to take it any more.

Third, educate yourself. Read the recent reports and re-acquaint yourself with the federal regulations. Bookmark the website for the Office of Human Research Protections (OHRP) (<http://www.hhs.gov/ohrp/>) – it has a wealth of resources on IRBs. The APA Science Directorate's Office of Research Ethics (<http://www.apa.org/science/rcr/homepage.html>) offers additional resources. If your action is to be effective, you must know the facts and the arguments.

Seek Proper Balance

Going down the road of increased and organized activism carries with it the need for responsible action. We must never lose sight of the goal: protecting and respecting the people who participate in our research. This goal trumps all others. It is more important than the sanctity of academic freedom, and it is more important than protecting institutions from bad press.

We do have a problem on our hands. It can be resolved, but it will take work and persistence. This one is worth your time, energy, and attention. I urge you to get engaged and join the cause. ■

The Twentieth International Workshop on Methodology of Twin and Family Studies: The Advanced Course

The next workshop will be held in Boulder, Colorado, March 5-9, 2007. This advanced course is intended for those *who have attended earlier workshops* and/or who are already familiar with the statistical and genetic principles of univariate and simple multivariate analyses with sibling data, and who have an interest in QTL analysis in the context of twin and sibling studies as well as other designs.

A home page is on the World Wide Web at <http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/workshop2007>.

The course will include: the causes of human variation, statistical and genetic theory, basic principles of linkage and association analysis, identity by descent (IBD) and genetic covariance, estimating IBD from marker data, genotyping error, sibling analysis methods for QTL linkage analysis, regression methods for linkage analysis, multivariate phenotypes, association studies — principles, population studies, family studies, power, single marker and haplotype based association methods, genome-wide association studies, power, Type 1 error in multiple testing, and animal models of behavior. Hands-on analysis will be an integral part of the course and will employ networked notebook computers. The schedule is available at: <http://ibgwww.colorado.edu/workshop2007/schedule.html>

An outstanding international faculty roster includes: Lon Cardon (Academic Director), Jeff Barrett, David Evans, Jonathan Flint, William Valdar, Wellcome Trust Center for Human Genetics and University of Oxford, UK; Hermine Maes, Mike Neale, Virginia Institute for Psychiatric and Behavioral Genetics, VA; Goncalo Abecasis, University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, MI; Dorret Boomsma, Meike Bartels, Danielle Posthuma, Amsterdam Vrije Universiteit, NL; Ben Neale, Institute of Psychiatry, University of London, UK; Pak Sham, Stacey Cherny, University of Hong Kong; Nick Martin, Sarah Medland, Kate Morley, Queensland Institute of Medical Research, AU; Shaun Purcell, Manuel Ferreira, Harvard University, MA; John Hewitt (Local Host), Matt McQueen, Jeff Lessem, Institute for Behavioral Genetics, Boulder, CO.

The registration fee will be \$350, payable by January 19, 2007. Thereafter, the registration fee will be \$400. Details of local arrangements, registration, and accommodation are available from the workshop secretary, Kendra Locher.

Further information may be obtained from John Hewitt, or the workshop secretary, Kendra Locher, IBG, University of Colorado, Boulder, CO 80309-0447, USA; Telephone: 303-735-5440; FAX: 303-492-8063; E-mail: John.Hewitt@Colorado.edu or Kendra.Locher@Colorado.edu.

Minority students and scientists are especially encouraged to attend. Partial financial support for US minority participants is available by application to the local host, John Hewitt. Financial support for this workshop is provided by grant MH19918 from the National Institute of Mental Health.

The National Institute on Drug Abuse Announces Summer Internship Opportunities

The National Institute on Drug Abuse (NIDA), part of the National Institutes of Health (NIH), is offering summer research training opportunities at its facility in Baltimore, Maryland. Students who are accepted to the program will work side-by-side with some of the world's leading scientists, in an environment devoted exclusively to cutting-edge biomedical research.

NIDA's mission is to better understand drug abuse and addiction — to investigate the causes and consequences of this disease and develop new and more effective prevention and treatment interventions. NIDA's Intramural Research Program (IRP) includes numerous basic research laboratories, a brain imaging facility, and an outpatient treatment clinic. Examples of research projects include: drug-seeking behavior in rats, smoking cessation, genomic studies for nicotine dependence, and the effects of methamphetamine and cocaine on the brain.

“Over the years, hundreds of students have participated in NIDA's summer programs, many of whom have gone on to graduate and medical school,” said Stephen J. Heishman, Associate Director for Education and Training at the IRP and coordinator of the NIH Summer Internship Program. “This program gives students the opportunity to be involved in research at a level that most do not experience in their high school or undergraduate courses. In addition to their research projects, students attend seminars designed to inform them about the various facets of drug abuse research and participate in a poster session at the conclusion of the internship in which they present their findings to NIH scientists. As a result, students find this summer research program to be an incredible learning experience.”

“Our interns participate in research that focuses on behavioral neuroscience, clinical pharmacology and therapeutics, neuropsychiatry, and neuroimaging,” said Jean Lud Cadet, Chief of NIDA's Molecular Neuropsychiatry Branch and Co-Chair of the Minority Research Training Program (MRTP) at the NIDA-IRP. “The students who have participated in the past have been young bright people who are hungry for knowledge,” he added.

The Summer 2007 Internship Programs are for students 16 years of age or older who are enrolled at least half-time in high school, have finished high school, or are attending an accredited U.S. college or university. All internships pay monthly stipends based upon education levels, but housing costs are not provided. To be eligible, candidates must be U.S. citizens or permanent residents.

Like many of the research training programs at the NIH, the Summer Internship Programs are very selective. NIDA is particularly interested in recruiting students who are from disadvantaged backgrounds and from ethnic groups whose participation in science has been traditionally limited. Prospective candidates should apply electronically via the Internet — the application deadline is March 1. For more information, go to <http://www.training.nih.gov/student/sip/index.asp>. Information about the MRTP can be obtained from Christie Brannock at cbrann@intra.nida.nih.gov.

Elderhostel K. Patricia Cross Doctoral Research Grant

Elderhostel invites applications from doctoral candidates researching lifelong or later-life learning for the Elderhostel K. Patricia Cross Doctoral Research Grant. This \$5,000 grant is awarded annually to a student in various disciplines, including but not limited to psychology, education, gerontology, cognitive studies, neuroscience and social work.

Proposal Deadline: February 15, 2007.

For further information, including requirements and the online application, please visit: www.elderhostel.org/grants.

APA Invites Applications for 2007-2008 Science Policy Fellowship

APA's Science Directorate invites psychologists to apply in January for its annual Science Policy Fellowship program. One Fellow will spend the 2007-2008 academic year working as a special assistant in an executive branch science agency, with specific, individualized placement based on the Fellow's expertise and interests. Past APA Science Policy Fellows have worked in the White House Office of Science and Technology Policy, the Office of Behavioral and Social Sciences Research and the National Institute of Child Health and Human Development at the National Institutes of Health, the Department of Defense, the Central Intelligence Agency, and the National Science Foundation.

The overall goals of the program are to provide psychological scientists an invaluable learning experience in research administration and policy, while contributing to more effective use of psychological knowledge within federal science mission agencies. The prospective Fellow must demonstrate competence in scientific psychology and show strong interest in applying psychological knowledge to national science policy issues. Complete application instructions and materials are available on the Science Public Policy Office website (<http://www.apa.org/ppo/fellows/scifellow.html>) and Heather Kelly may be contacted at (202) 336-5932 or via email at hkelly@apa.org for more information about the Fellowship.

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Applications Available for Undergraduate Summer Science Programs

The Science Directorate's two undergraduate summer research programs, the thirteenth Summer Science Institute (SSI) and the fourth Advanced Statistical Training in Psychology (ASTP), are now accepting applications for 2007.

Applications for the Summer Science Institute, to be held at the **University of California, San Diego** June 22 – July 1, 2007, will be accepted until **February 16, 2007**. At SSI, 32 exceptional undergraduate students will be immersed in the science of psychology. During the intensive session, students will explore the intellectual, personal, and social nature of research in psychology through stimulating group seminars and laboratory experiences. SSI will stress the importance of the scientific method in psychology. Students will have the opportunity to learn from distinguished faculty at one of the nation's top graduate programs in psychology. Please visit www.apa.org/science/ssi.html for complete details about the program and the online application.

Applications for ASTP, to be held at the **American Psychological Association** July 14 – 22, 2007, will be accepted until **March 2, 2007**. This program is designed to give rising seniors, who plan to pursue advanced degrees in psychological science, the opportunity to learn about statistics and research methods in a dynamic setting that emphasizes hands-on computer skills. ASTP targets students from traditionally underrepresented groups in psychology. The definition of underrepresented groups for this program is broad and includes members of ethnic minority groups, first generation college students, and students who have had to overcome other kinds of social, physical or economic barriers on the road to academic excellence. Please visit www.apa.org/science/astp.html for the online application and more program information.

Announcing the 2007 APA Advanced Training Institutes!

Sponsored by the Science Directorate, the Advanced Training Institutes (ATIs) expose new and established faculty, researchers, and advanced graduate students to state of the art psychological research methods. Each year the Board of Scientific Affairs guides the selection of ATIs, which focus on technologies and tools that are increasingly important to psychological research. ATIs tackle the big issues confronting researchers who use (or want to use) these innovative methodologies, through lecture, labs, and discussions. ATI instructors make a special effort to cover the diverse ways that emerging technologies are being applied across psychology, as well as the more specific ways individual attendees can incorporate these methods into their research areas. Keep tuned to <http://www.apa.org/science/ati.html> for updates on these exciting programs and to apply! Application deadlines begin in early winter. If you have any questions or concerns, contact the ATI Administrator at ati@apa.org or 202-336-6000.

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Structural Equation Modeling in Longitudinal Research, May 28-June 1, 2007, Charlottesville, VA. This ATI will highlight recent methodological advances in the analysis of longitudinal data in psychology using structural equation modeling (SEM). A range of topics will be covered, including fundamental measurement problems, dealing with incomplete data, and new techniques for dynamic analyses. John McArdle directs this popular program, which takes place at the University of Virginia.

Childcare: It's More than You Think! A Practical, Hands-On Approach to Learning about Large-Scale Databases, June 4-8, 2007, Chapel Hill, NC. This workshop focuses on large-scale datasets, using the NICHD-sponsored longitudinal Study of Early Child Care (SECC) database as the exemplar. Topics include background on the study and its design, introduction to the raw data sets, statistical strategies for large-scale datasets, and discussion of mining large-scale datasets. SECC investigators and data managers lead this ATI, which takes place at the University of North Carolina.

Nonlinear Methods for Psychological Science, June 11-15, 2007, Cincinnati, OH. This workshop teaches methods of nonlinear analysis, and provides each participant with the first-hand experience of having analyzed data for nonlinear structure. On the first day of the workshop each individual generates data that they will learn to analyze during the ATI. Continuing access to the software that will enable them to perform further nonlinear analyses is provided by instructors after the ATI. Guy Van Orden directs this program, which is held at the University of Cincinnati.

Performing Web-Based Research, July 9-13, 2007, Cedar Falls, IA. This ATI trains psychologists how, why, and why not to perform web-based research and data collection. Instructors provide background on internet-based research, and discuss the ethics of web-based research. Topics also include longitudinal web methods, large shared databases, web panels, and the recruitment and retention of unique participants through an entire survey or experiment. Website creation is introduced, using basic html and the Authorware software package as needed for each individual's project; each attendee should come prepared with a small web project that they would like to complete during the week. This workshop is led by John Eustis Williams, and takes place at the University of Northern Iowa.

Geographic Information Systems for Psychological Research, August 16, 2007, San Francisco, CA. This one-day ATI will take place the day before Convention, and will be conveniently located at one of the Convention hotels. A brief overview of GIS technology will be provided, as well as a more thorough description of the use of GIS in psychological research with plenty of examples. A few established psychologists who use GIS in their research will speak about the strengths of this methodology and its contribution to their investigations. GIS technology will be matched to the specific research interests of some attendees for demonstrations. Reginald Golledge, a leading behavioral geographer, will direct this ATI.

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APA SCIENCE DIRECTORATE WEBSITE:
www.apa.org/science

Science Directorate Email Address: science@apa.org

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