

Committee on Human Research (CHR)

2021 Annual Report

Committee Members

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Staff Liaison(s)

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Ethical Issues in Research Using Mobile, Pervasive-sensing, Imaging, and other Digital Technologies

The Committee continued working on a broad multi-pronged initiative to explore the ethical ramifications of ubiquitous digital technology use in everyday life and the increasing use of these technologies in research. Projects include:

- Raising awareness about this complex issue within the behavioral and psychological science community. To achieve this goal, the Committee successfully submitted a proposal for a special issue of *American Psychologist*, which will feature articles exploring the ethical, legal, regulatory, and social issues associated with the increased use of digital technologies in behavioral health research.
- Obtained funding from the National Science Foundation to convene an interdisciplinary group of experts including behavioral scientists, ethicists, institutional review board (IRB) members, experts in the design and use of various digital technology platforms to develop a consensus statement on if and how the prevailing ethical framework for research with human participants, as elucidated in the Belmont Report, is relevant in today's digital world.

Newly Revised Regulations for Research with Human Participants

The revised Federal Policy for the Protection of Human Subjects (also known as the Common Rule) went into full effect in January 2020. To assess the impact of the revised regulations on behavioral, cognitive, and psychological scientists who conduct research with human participants, as well as institutional review boards that review such research, in 2021 the Committee began developing an online survey. Given the complexity of the regulations, CHR spent most of the year fine-tuning the survey, and is on track to be conducted in 2022. The results of the survey will position APA to advocate for federal guidance that will enable IRBs to more judiciously interpret and implement the new requirements of the Common Rule, to both support scientifically valid behavioral, cognitive, and psychological research as well as protect the rights and welfare of research participants. The survey results could also inform APA efforts to develop educational resources to help researchers comply with regulatory requirements efficiently.

Impact on APA's Strategic Priorities

These CHR projects strengthen APA's standing as an authoritative voice for psychology and prepares the discipline and profession of psychology for the future. In particular, this work embodies and upholds the ethical standards for the profession and discipline nationally as well as serving as a leading resource for standards and evidence-based guidelines for the field. We also anticipate our work will enable the utilization of psychology to make a positive impact on critical societal issues. The Committee's activities will promote the application of psychological science to the development and adaptive use of new technologies that affect people's lives.