

**Intensifying Efforts to Incorporate Community Voice in Research:
The Value Added of a Community-Engaged Research Consultation Service**

Introduction: Research-intensive universities face unique challenges in promoting community-engaged research because of varying forms and scope of research conducted by investigators. The Community Engagement Program of Johns Hopkins Institute for Clinical and Translational Research (ICTR) offers a free consultation service through its Community Research Advisory Council (C-RAC) that creates a forum for researchers to obtain guidance from local residents, patients, and advocacy groups.

Methods: The C-RAC consultation service is promoted by the IRB, a website, and word of mouth. A study team first presents the study rationale, design, recruitment, evaluation, and dissemination plans. The C-RAC then convenes with an in-depth discussion of the major issues such as inclusion criteria, recruitment, the consent process, acceptability and relevance of the proposed intervention, perceived risks/benefits to participant and the perceived impact on the community and society at large. Following the discussion, the C-RAC provides a set of recommendations to the study team.

Results: There have been 25 consultations (including six repeat consultations for the same team) over the past three years covering a wide range of topics (e.g., hypertension, diabetes, AIDS, genetics) and scope (quality improvement, randomized behavioral trial, pharmacological trial). C-RAC consultations resulted in 3 major funded projects through Patient-Centered Outcomes Research Institute. Researcher evaluations have also been positive.

Conclusions:

The C-RAC has demonstrated its feasibility and acceptability with a positive impact on the design of research projects. While our current evaluation focused on the researcher-specific outcomes, it would be important to evaluate the C-RAC member views of the review process.

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