

© 2016 The Author(s)

This is an Open Access article distributed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License which permits unrestricted non-commercial use, distribution, and reproduction in any medium, provided the original work is properly cited

LETTER TO EDITORS

ISSN: 2477-4073

UNDERSTANDING ETHICAL PRINCIPLES IN NURSING RESEARCH

Agianto*

Adult Health Nursing Department, School of Nursing, University of Lambung Mangkurat Indonesia
Faculty of Nursing, Khon kaen University, Thailand

***Corresponding author:**

Agianto, RN, MNS, PhD (Cand)

School of Nursing, University of Lambung Mangkurat.

Jl. Veteran Sungai Bilu No.128, Melayu, Kec. Banjarmasin Tengah, Kota Banjarmasin, Kalimantan Selatan
70122, Indonesia. E-mail: agi.bjm82@yahoo.com

Madam,

Researchers have to concern with ethical issues if their studies involve human beings or animals. It is to ensure that their rights are protected. However, it may be challenging for some researchers due to the requirements for the approval, such as the impact of the study, how to collect the study, and others. Sometimes, the researchers need to revise the proposal of their studies many times to fulfill all the requirements.

Actually, there are many important reasons why we need to pay attention to ethical concerns in conducting research, namely: To protect the rights of participants and reduce the potential of physical and psychological discomfort, harm and/or danger from research methods; To protect the rights of researchers to carry out any legal investigations as well as the reputation of

the university for research conducted and/or sponsored by it; To reduce the possibility of declares of negligence against individual researchers, the university and any collaborating persons or organizations; and To catch research funding and refereed journals, particularly international publication increasingly require a statement of ethical practices in applications for research funds and/or as a condition for publication.¹ All these reasons however fit on the ethical principles, consisting of non-maleficence and beneficence, respect for human dignity, justice, and risk or benefit assessment.²

The principles on non-maleficence and beneficence are the right to protection from harm and discomfort, and the right to protection from exploitation; while respect for human dignity is the second ethical principle in the Belmont report. This

principle includes the right to self-determination and the right to full disclosure. The third is justice, which includes participants' right to fair treatment and their right to privacy.² On the other hand, one strategy that researchers can use to protect participants is to conduct a risk-benefit assessment before submitting the research proposal to Institutional review Board (IRB). In Canada it is called as a Research Ethics Board (REB) designed to examine whether the benefits of participating in a study are in line with the costs, financial, physical, emotional, or social – that is, whether the risk/benefit ratio is acceptable. At this point, the major potential benefits and risks to participants can be seen during conducting the study.²

The benefits assessments to participants include 1) to access a potentially beneficial intervention that may otherwise be unavailable to them, 2) comfort in being able to discuss situation or problem with friendly, objective person, 3) increasing knowledge about themselves or their conditions, either through opportunity for introspection and self-reflection or through direct interaction with researchers, 4) escaping from normal routine, excited of being part of a study, 5) satisfied with the information provided that may help others with similar problems or conditions, 6) directing monetary or material gains through stipends or other incentives. It cannot be refunding the money or payment reward. The researcher can give something like food or money for transportation, but in minimum price about 10 – 20 USD, and 7) telling participants that the researcher will take care them during and after the study.³

The potential risks of assessment include physical harm (e.g. unanticipated side effects), physical discomfort, fatigue or boredom, psychological or emotional distress resulting from self-disclosure,

introspection, fear of the unknown, discomfort with strangers, fear of eventual repercussions, anger or embarrassment at the type of questions being asking. Social risks are such as the risk of stigma, adverse effects on personal relationship, loss of status, and monetary costs (e.g., for transportation, child care, time lost from work).³

Besides, some nurse researchers use animals rather than human beings as their subjects, typically focusing on biophysiologic phenomena. Despite some opposition to such research by animal rights activists, researchers in health fields likely will continue to use animals to explore physiologic mechanisms and to test interventions that could pose risks to humans. In this regard, ethical considerations are clearly different for animals and humans; for instance, the concept of informed consent is not relevant for animal subjects. Guidelines have been developed governing treatment of animals in research. The principles for the proper treatment of animals are used in biomedical and behavioral research. Those principles cover such issues as the transport of research animals, alternatives to using animals, pain and distress in animal subjects, researcher qualifications, the use of appropriate anesthesia, and euthanizing animals under certain conditions.² Given the explanation above, therefore, in order to provide safe study both for human and animal, understanding the ethical principles is needed for all researchers.

[Declaration of Conflicting Interest](#)

None declared.

[Funding](#)

None.

[Authorship Contribution](#)

This study is the original work of the corresponding author.

References

1. Canterbury Christ Church University. An introduction to ethics issues and principles in research involving human participants. 2006; <https://www.canterbury.ac.uk/research-and-consultancy/documents/introduction-to-ethics.pdf>
2. Polit DF, Beck CT. *Nursing research: generating and assessing evidence for nursing practice*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health /Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2008.
3. Loiselle CG, Profetto-McGrath J, Polit DF, Beck CT. *Canadian essentials of nursing research*. Philadelphia: Wolters Kluwer Health /Lippincott Williams & Wilkins; 2010.

Cite this article as: Agianto. Understanding ethical principles in nursing research. *Belitung Nursing Journal*. 2016;2(2):22-24. <https://doi.org/10.33546/bnj.10>