

The NHS research governance process: a researcher's experience

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Abstract

Health research that seeks the participation of patients requires ethical and administrative clearances through the NHS research governance process. This is a two-stage process which involves a central Research Ethics Committee (REC), and Research and Development (R&D) at specific Trusts. Reflection is undertaken from a researcher's perspective on their experience of negotiating NHS research governance, including R&D within six Trusts, to obtain clearance for a qualitative study. The REC offered a clear framework for the researcher, but the committee meeting focused on scientific merit to the exclusion of more distinctively ethical matters. Furthermore, while the committee was receptive to a qualitative proposal, the administrative apparatus of the REC is potentially more conducive to clinical/quantitative studies. While the REC offered a clear procedural framework, this was absent from Trusts' R&D processes. There is greater scope for NHS research governance to be undergirded by complementary ethical and administrative review processes.