About St John of God Health Care

St John of God Health Care is a Catholic not-for-profit health care provider, with hospitals, home nursing and pathology services, as well as Social Outreach services which reach out to people experiencing disadvantage to improve health and wellbeing.

We strive to serve the common good by providing holistic, ethical and person-centred care and support. We aim to go beyond quality care to provide an experience for people that honours their dignity, is compassionate and affirming and leaves them with a reason to hope.

Minimal paperwork and duplication of paperwork

The Committee accepts the application paperwork of non-SJGHC HRECs.

The SJGHC HREC has made significant progress towards a completely online, paperless research review process.

Competitive, One-off, Administrative Fees

There is a schedule of competitive administrative fees for new research depending on the type of research (eg. commercially sponsored, not for profit external studies, university applications, and internally-initiated research) which is charged as a one-off fee at the time of initial submission. The fee covers the costs associated with the review and consideration of the research, as well as required record retention and archiving of research.

COLLABORATION & COOPERATION FOR EXCELLENCE IN RESEARCH

Commitment to ethical, high quality research is a reflection of SJGHC's Catholic-based Mission and Values, at the core of which is the dignity of the human person.

Our focus is on fostering a strong culture of research ethics which facilitates quality research and which respects and protects participants as well as benefits the community.

The SJGHC HREC and SJGHC research governance processes facilitate quality health care research by engaging with researchers in affirming the rationale for research and how it can improve health care, planning the research, offering suggestions for improvements of scientific rigour, suggesting solutions for ethical dilemmas, and defining the most appropriate means of monitoring the research. Through this collaboration and cooperation, researchers (both internal and external to the organisation) are supported in their development, and together we contribute to excellence in research.

Review of External research

For example, research conducted in a clinician’s private rooms, smaller hospitals and health services which may not have access to their own or local HREC.

As a certified “Lead HREC,” the SJGHC HREC can, on behalf of non-SJGHC organisations/researchers, undertake the ethical review of research conducted at non-SJGHC premises and/or where researchers have no access to another HREC.
ABOUT US

Single, central HREC for Single Stream Submission
St John of God Health Care (SJGHC) operates a single, central Human Research Ethics Committee (HREC) based at St John of God Subiaco Hospital in Western Australia, which covers all of its 17 metropolitan and regional hospitals, pathology services and outreach and community services situated throughout Australia.

Researchers intending to undertake research across more than one SJGHC hospital/service only need to apply once for review by the SJGHC HREC.

Over 15 years experience
The SJGHC HREC was established in 1999 and has been in continuous operation. It meets regularly on a monthly basis subsequent to meetings of its Scientific Review Sub-Committee (SRC). Submission and meeting dates are posted on the Human Research Ethics Portal (HREP) as well as the SJGHC public website and internal intranet.

Recognised HREC & a Certified “Lead HREC” in Australia
The Committee is a properly constituted HREC and operates in accordance with the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research (latest edition) (“the National Statement”). It is also guided by the Code of Ethical Standards (Catholic Health Australia, latest edition) as it applies to research, the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research (latest edition), & other relevant codes and regulatory requirements.

In 2010, SJGHC was amongst one of the first organisations in Australia to achieve 3 year certification of its HREC under the NHMRC’s National Certification Scheme (at the time known as the “HOMER” initiative). The Scheme aims to streamline ethical review of multicentre research. With subsequent renewal of this certification, SJGHC continues to maintain its certification status.

OUR REVIEW & APPROVAL PATHWAYS REFLECT THE “RISK” OF THE RESEARCH

Full review for “Higher Risk” Research
For example, clinical trials of drugs, devices, surgery (phases 0, 1, 2, 3, 4), and other clinical interventional research.

The SRC first reviews the research for scientific merit, validity and safety. Researchers are given the opportunity to reply to any scientific queries before the research proceeds to the SJGHC HREC. Researchers receive written confirmation of the outcome of ethical review and provided all other approvals have been granted, final study approval is issued.

‘Higher Risk’ research can also undergo expedited review if it meets certain criteria e.g. prior ethical approval granted by another certified HREC.

Expedited review for “Low Risk” Research
For example, data registries, human quality improvement (QI) projects.

Ethical review is conducted out of session by select members of the SJGHC SRC/HREC and the proposal is then approved by the Chairperson of the SJGHC HREC, with reporting to the SJGHC HREC at its next scheduled meeting.

Exempt from review: “Negligible Risk” Research
For example, research using existing collections of data/records that contain only non-identifiable data.

There is no formal review but the Chairperson of the SJGHC HREC will confirm approval in writing, with reporting to the SJGHC HREC at its next scheduled meeting.

OUR DISTINGUISHING FEATURES

Supported by a SJGHC Scientific Review Sub-Committee
Research that is not grounded in sound science with capable researchers (ie has scientific merit and integrity) is not ethical. The SRC’s role is to ensure that research is scientifically satisfactory before it is then considered by the SJGHC HREC.

The expertise of the SRC membership covers qualitative and quantitative scientific methodologies as well as experience with epidemiological research, surgical, medical, pathology/basic science, nursing and genetic research.

Expertise, skills and dedication
Members are appointed on merit and are recognised leaders in their respective fields. Their collective experience ensures comprehensive consideration of all ethical issues and from various perspectives/points of view.

Members work on a voluntary basis. Only the HREC Chairperson and members of the SRC are paid a nominal fee for service.

Longevity of service and experience in research ethics and research governance
The skills and dedication of the Chairpersons and members, some of whom remain as long-standing members since the HREC’s inception, have been pivotal to the development and sustainability of efficient research governance at SJGHC.

This longevity of service and the experience in research ethics and governance also extends to the support role of the SJGHC HREC Executive Officer.

Effective management of conflicts of interest
Members sign confidentiality and declaration of interest forms. The HREC and SRC have procedures in place to manage potential conflicts of interest in research, so as not to compromise the research process or research governance.

EFFICIENT RESEARCH GOVERNANCE:

Personalised Service
The SJGHC Ethics Office, as the central contact, is able to:

♦ directly address/direct all research queries throughout the organisation.
♦ assist with research planning/negotiate timeframes to ensure timely start-up of research.
♦ provide preliminary advice and ongoing support for the researcher in obtaining and maintaining ethical and site operational approval for the lifecycle of their research.

Timely Reviews
♦ Turn around time of approximately 5 working days for “low risk” research
♦ Turn around time of approximately 40 working days for “higher risk” research

Open and Clear Communication
Researchers are welcome to attend Committee meetings to outline their research.

Researchers are kept fully informed on the progress of their research.

Reasons for decisions of the SJGHC HREC are explained with reference to the National Statement.