Feasibility of Establishing a HREC Credentialing System for Multi-site Clinical Trials in Australia: An Invitation to Participate

Background
As part of the Australian Government’s Accelerating Clinical Trials Reforms initiative, the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC) has been tasked with streamlining ethics review and research governance processes in Australia. To this end funding was allocated to the NHMRC in July 2014 as part of the Government’s commitment to Simplified and Consistent Health and Medical Research to assess the feasibility of introducing a credentialing system for a small number of human research ethics committees (HRECs) for the ethics review of multi-centre clinical trials. This concept was first proposed in the Strategic Review of Health and Medical Research (the McKeon Review) in 2013.

Purpose of Stakeholder Consultation Process
The NHMRC would like to gauge your opinion on whether introducing a credentialing system for multi-centre clinical research is feasible and whether it would strengthen the existing ethics review process.

The NHMRC has engaged Nikola Stepanov and her project team from the School of Medicine at the University of Queensland to undertake this project. Nikola and her colleagues, Sue Jenkins-Marsh, Andrew Crowden and Malcolm Parker, have particular expertise in human research ethics and governance processes in Australia.

The main themes to be explored during the Stakeholder Consultation Process include:

(i) Perceived benefits of a credentialing system for the ethics review of multi-centre clinical trials;
(ii) Perceived barriers and risks of a credentialing system for the ethics review of multi-centre clinical trials;
(iii) Types of models that could be considered and how they would work with the existing human research ethics review system;
(iv) Desirable criteria or standards for credentialing.

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