



# RESEARCH SHOWCASE

*Saskatchewan's Premier  
Health Research Event*

Saskatchewan Health Research Showcase, presented by SCPOR and Saskatchewan Health Authority, took place on November 16 & 18, 2021. A celebration of the important and exciting health research taking place in our province, Research Showcase highlighted posters and presentations on a variety of topics.

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## **Maintaining ethical conduct in quality improvement projects**

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Quality improvement (QI) projects and clinical research play essential roles in healthcare to enhance and improve patient care. Clinical research uses the scientific method to investigate a health-related problem or phenomenon systematically. QI projects also employ rigorous methods, but it has become more difficult to delineate what constitutes QI versus research. Furthermore, without oversight from a research ethics board to ensure ethical conduct in QI, how can project teams ensure ethical conduct within their QI initiative.

The purpose of this abstract and presentation is to provide five guidelines for maintaining ethical conduct in QI initiatives.

The following five guidelines are proposed:

- (1) Review the purpose and design of the activity, with QI projects aiming to be safe, effective, patient-centred, timely, efficient, and equitable.
- (2) Consider the need for informed consent to respect participants' autonomy and protect them from project risks that they have not agreed to accept.
- (3) Consider how participant confidentiality is protected and take measures to ensure no participant information can be unintentionally transmitted.
- (4) Consider whether the right of the participant to withdraw from the project is necessary.
- (5) Seek an exemption from a research ethics board for the QI initiative to ensure that further oversight is not required.

Although a review by a research ethics board is not required for QI, it is no justification for less rigour or less attention to the protection of participants. Adhering to these five guidelines can help to ensure that ethical conduct is maintained when conducting quality improvement.

**Learning Objectives:**

- Understand the delineation between quality improvement and clinical research.
- Define five guidelines for ensuring ethical conduct in quality improvement projects.

**How was this research identified as a priority?**

QI is becoming increasingly more common in health sciences. The delineation between QI and clinical research is a grey area, which leads to the issue of maintaining ethical conduct in QI when oversight from a research ethics board is not required.