Western Cape Government

Department of Health and Wellness
Provincial Health Research Unit
Health Intelligence
Health.Research@westerncape.gov.za

Frequently Asked Questions

1. **What is the research application process?**
   The current research application process is as follows:
   1. Register and login on the National Health Research Database (NHRD) - https://nhrd.health.gov.za/
   2. Create a new application.
   3. Select the appropriate province.
   4. Upload all your supporting electronic documents.
   5. Select the facilities where you wish to conduct your research.
   6. Ensure that you have completed all required fields, save, and submit your application.
   7. When following up on the progress of your application, please ensure that the NHRD reference number (WC_yyyymm_xxx) is in the subject line of all communication to the Department's Health Research Unit.

2. **What documents are required for the NHRD application?**
   The following documentation is required when submitting your application to the NHRD:
   1. Ethical clearance (from an Ethics Committee registered with the South African National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC).
   2. A final PDF version of the study protocol.
   3. A completed 2024 research summary for managers form in PDF.
   4. If you are requesting access to data from the Provincial Health Data Centre (PHDC), submit a completed Annexure A and variable list.
   5. Any other supporting document (if relevant) such as SAPHRA, SANCTR and NDOH approval letter for clinical trials.
   6. Once the research is conducted you must complete a short summary of the findings (Annexure 9).

3. **What is the research approval process?**
   The current research application and approval process is as follows:
   1. The Health Research Unit downloads applications from the NHRD.
   2. Only fully completed applications are reviewed.
   3. The Provincial Health research unit reviewing team will review your submission. Should any issues be identified, we will liaise with the researcher to resolve them before the next stage. We also have subject experts to co-review your application if we pick up issues.
   4. If you requested access to data from the Provincial Health Data Centre (PHDC), your application will be forwarded to the PHDC to conduct a feasibility assessment of the research request. The Health Research Unit will issue a feasibility letter for the researcher if the research is deemed feasible by the PHDC. Please note that this letter does not guarantee that the data will be released.

6. For facility requests your application will be sent to the districts and/or facility for review.
7. Once the requested facility approves, the Provincial Health Research Unit will issue a provincial research approval letter.

4. **When should I query my application?**
   The application process usually takes 6-8 weeks after it has been submitted to the facilities and districts for review and approval. Follow up after the 8 weeks if you have not received feedback by then.

5. **Should I apply to NHRD while waiting for documents such as ethics or the clinical trial no.?**
   No, if your application is not complete and equipped with all the required documents, your application will not be processed and will be declined.

6. **How to make an amendment to the NHRD?**
   If you need to amend your application, you will need to alert the Provinical Health Research Unit to revert your application on the NHRD. The NHRD does not notify us once amendments are made, thus you will have to notify us when you have made changes. When applying for an amendment, the following documents are required:
   1. Annexure 8 (progress report)
   2. An updated 2024 research summary for managers form.
   3. A valid ethical approval letter.

7. **How to apply for an extension on a study?**
   If you need an extension on your application, you will need to alert the Provincial Health Research Unit and submit the following documents:
   1. Annexure 8 (progress report) – template available on the health research website
   2. An updated 2024 research summary for managers form.
   3. A valid ethical approval letter

8. **What happens if I apply with missing information, an incomplete application, and/or the researcher does not respond to review queries and emails sent from the WC Health Research Unit?**
   the researcher will be given one week to submit amendments or provide the outstanding documents. All applications undergo review at the provincial level before being forwarded to the districts/facilitites/PHDC.

9. **What is the process for requesting access to a tertiary hospital?**
   There are 3 tertiary hospitals, namely: Groote Schuur Hospital, Tygerberg Hospital, and Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital. Each tertiary Hospitals manage its own application process which is separate from the provincial health research process. To enquire about the status of your application, please refer to the contact details provided below:

   Groote Schuur Hospital - GSHResearch.Request@westerncape.gov.za
   Tygerberg Hospital - TBHResearch@westerncape.gov.za
   Red Cross War Memorial Children's Hospital - rxh.researchrequests@westerncape.gov.za