

Group Discussion – Dawn Pollon, Crystal White, Diana Raymond-Watts, Katarin McLeod & Melissa Dobson

Clause: Any similarity to real life situations is coincidental and these cases were generated through discussion and dialogue between the group members.

Case Study 1

You are the Chair of a REB in a mid-size institution; you have been working hard to create a positive and safe culture for the REB so that delicate situations can be discussed in an open and transparent manner. Jeff, a Senior Executive team member knocks on your office door and asks to speak with you. You had a previous reporting role to Jeff (unrelated role to your current REB Chair role). You have maintained a good relationship with Jeff. Jeff indicates to you that he will be firing Michael, one of your REB board members from the REB that afternoon. Jeff has the authority to terminate a board member without notice. While you had had one previous discussion with Michael about his curt communications with a researcher regarding their study, you have had no previous discussions with Jeff regarding Michael and were unaware of any significant concerns with Michael or this decision. You are caught off-guard, but are instantly concerned about this decision and the impact it could have on the REB board culture.

Using your skill set, and the new tools gained from the previous session:

- 1. What are the elements of conflict in this scenario?*
- 2. What would you do next, and why?*
- 3. Have you had a similar experience? What worked and what would didn't work?*

Case Study 2

You are known as a “level-headed” individual and as a “go-to” expert when it comes to research ethics procedures, policies, and protocols. You have been selected to Chair a committee to investigate a research integrity allegation regarding Dr. Clark (physician/researcher). As with any integrity investigation, the outcome of the committee could have serious implications for Dr. Clark, funding for her research, and any future research. Procedure requires that as Chair, you need to interview Dr. Clark to understand their perspective of the issue. During the interview, Dr. Clark is extremely aggressive and arrogant, questioning your knowledge of her research and common ethical practices as they relate to her field. She is antagonistic and dismissive of your questions and infers that she should not have to answer to you, a lowly ad-hoc Chair of a witch-hunt! During the interview, she requests the CV's of each of the committee members who will make up the review committee. As you attempt to return to your interview questions so that you can better understand Dr. Clark's position, she questions your authority and states that you are engaging in slander and threatens civil litigation if this review proceeds. At that, you are incredulous, and she ends the interview by storming out of the room. A few days later, you contact Dr. Clark, and she refuses to speak with you. You are now in a serious dilemma as you are responsible to collect information and provide it to the Review Committee so they have a comprehensive understanding of the event(s)/issue(s) and are able to make a fair decision regarding the allegation. Once the committee has made a decision, you will be responsible for providing the Board of Directors with a report for their vetting and approval. Although you have many years of experience, you

are new to this organization and feeling perplexed about the Dr. Clark's comments and disposition, yet you are very aware about what is at stake for both you and Dr. Clark.

Using your skill set, and the new tools gained from the previous session:

1. *What are the elements of conflict in this scenario?*
2. *What would you do next, and why?*
3. *Have you had a similar experience? What worked and what would didn't work?*

Case Study 3

In this age of digital learning and communication, Dr. Helow teaches an undergraduate course where students collaborate with students who are not enrolled at the host university and who live in other parts of the world. For the past 10 years, Dr. Helow's course involved a required course assignment which is well known and "loved" by the students; it is graded and is part of the student's final mark. Over the years Dr. Helow had observed interesting elements that impact student group dynamics and success. Dr. Helow started to investigate the impact of these elements and it has become a research project lasting several years. Because of the nature of this assignment, Dr. Helow has kept track of the students who were enrolled in the course, who they contacted outside of class for this learning experience, what was discussed, and recorded it all as data. Dr. Helow has since published this research and gained great accolades for it.

As a new faculty member, you hear of this research, and you wonder – "Does this fall within the 'course evaluation' criteria or should it have gone through an REB review? Are the students aware of how their course assignments were used?"

When you meet Dr. Helow, she is adamant that there is nothing wrong with what she is doing; in fact, in her opinion, more faculty members should follow her lead! Besides, it was senior management that acknowledged and highlighted the success of her findings!

There are some ethically concerning elements of the research project. However, Dr. Helow is adamant that the learning activity continues, even though elements contravene many aspects of the TCPS2 and may even violate human rights acts

and privacy laws. Senior management supports the activity and draws a line between the research and the instructional activity, insisting it proceeds. The researchers' REB does not see this as research requiring review.

Using your skill set, and the new tools gained from the previous session:

1. *What are the elements of conflict in this scenario?*
2. *What would you do next, and why?*
3. *Have you had a similar experience? What worked and what would didn't work?*
4. *Should other Canadian REBs be informed about this research activity?*

Case Study 4

Dr. Smith has created a research project and obtained funding from an external source to explore the benefits and challenges of grouping first year physics' students with bachelor of education mentors to determine the quality of their experiences as they complete their physics course and laboratory. Dr. Smith's hope is that by placing the physics students in small groups with a bachelor of education mentor who understands how to scaffold physics, that retention rates will increase in the physics department. Dr. Smith has submitted her research protocol to REB and is awaiting a decision. At the same time, Dr. Smith's institution is planning on conducting a study examining student retention in the natural sciences, but using upper level honours science students. The purpose of this is for institutional knowledge. Both projects approach the REB and ask that their counterparts be stopped as they are each perceived by the other as interfering with the potential outcomes of their research. Dr. Smith identifies her rights to complete her research as academic freedom; she has a long history of Physics Education Research and has secured external funding for this project, something that would be lost if the project does not go ahead. The institutional research office is worried that her research may jeopardize their research.

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