

# ARECCI Glossary

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This is not an exhaustive list; rather it provides definitions of some of the more commonly used terms relevant to any knowledge-generating project.

**Bioethics:** A subspecialty within ethics. Originally included all life forms; in its current use, however, bioethics focuses on the identification, application, and analysis of values and principles relevant to issues in human health at the individual, societal, and public health levels.

**Ethics:** The process of determining what values presently underlie and what values ought to guide decisions and discussions.

**Ethics review**<sup>1</sup>: An institutionally defined, fully accountable process to determine, on the basis of methodological and ethical considerations, if and how a project may proceed.

**Health services**<sup>2</sup>: Refers to services provided to support, treat, maintain, and protect the health of individuals and populations. Services include

1. A continuum of care from promotion, prevention, emergency/crisis care, acute care, rehabilitation, chronic care to palliation.
2. Primary care, public health, mental health and addictions, community care, and seniors' health and living options.
3. Administrative and operational support activities:
  - a. Planning, performance measurement, quality and safety, health system design
  - b. Pharmacy, diagnostics, therapeutics, and support services

**Informed consent:** Refers to a process in which those consenting to a procedure or investigation do so voluntarily of their own free will and do so understanding all the following:

- The purpose and nature of the procedure or investigation.
- What participation requires the individual to do.
- What participation requires the individual to risk.
- What benefits are intended to result.

**Knowledge-generating projects:** Any inquiry, investigation, project, protocol, study, or trial that is related to the health of individuals or communities, that involves people or their health information, and that takes place in a community, a health organization, a service delivery organization, or an individual practice within the province.

**Minimizing risk:** Decreasing the number of risks within a project.

**Mitigating risk:** Decreasing the severity of the remaining risks within a project.

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<sup>1</sup> Source: *Protecting People While Increasing Knowledge 2005*

<sup>2</sup> Adapted from Alberta Health Services Board website

**Organization's recognized review process:** Systematic review by a duly constituted group of individuals with appropriate project ethics training and who have no vested interest in the project and are instituted or recognized by the organization.

**Participants:** The people who provide the data that is collected and examined in a specific project, and thus the people we are protecting and respecting in any quality improvement or evaluation project. The term participants includes: patients, clients, residents, subjects, respondents, employees, contract staff, and volunteers, or their data.

**Professional ethics<sup>3</sup>:** A set of ethical privileges generated by a group of professionals and designed specifically to govern their professional practices.

**Program evaluation (PE):** The systematic collection and analysis of information about program activities, characteristics, and outcomes to make judgments about the program, improve program effectiveness, and/or inform decisions about future programming. *See also quality improvement and evaluation projects.*

**Project ethics:** The application of ethics considerations across a range of knowledge-generating investigations, including quality improvement, evaluation, and research projects, so that people or their information are protected and respected.

**Project leader:** The person who coordinates the activities of the project team.

**Project team:** A group of people who are actively involved in designing and executing quality improvement and evaluation projects.

**Quality assurance (QA):** A process in which the activities of an organization and/or program are systematically monitored and evaluated to determine the effectiveness and efficiency of care and service provided. Quality Assurance can identify trends and issues through the systematic monitoring that lead to the development of Quality Improvement projects.

According to the Alberta Evidence Act – Section 9 (2008), Quality assurance records

9(1) In this section, (a) “quality assurance activity” means a planned or systematic activity the purpose of which is to study, assess or evaluate the provision of health services with a view to the continual improvement of

- i. the quality of health care or health services, or
- ii. the level of skill, knowledge and competence of health service providers;

ARECCI excludes quality assurance (QA) under the umbrella term QI and evaluation projects. QA is excluded because QA relates to issues of compliance and ongoing monitoring activities, and not to the broader sense of projects which have a beginning and an end.

**Quality improvement (QI):** Projects that apply scientific methods, project management and group process tools to analyze data and improve all aspects of service delivery with particular focus on eliminating waste, reducing variation, and improving reliability. *See also quality improvement and evaluation projects.*

**Quality improvement and evaluation projects:** The term used to refer to quality improvement (QI) and evaluation projects that have a distinct beginning and end. While significant differences exist between QI and evaluation projects, risk to participants may be the same. Therefore, for the purpose of this course, they are usually grouped together.

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<sup>3</sup> Source: <http://web.utk.edu/~ggrabber/glossary.htm>

**Research ethics board (REB):** A duly constituted board with the specific mandate to review and make formal decisions on the ethical acceptability of proposed research. For soundness, the review must include methodology, ethics, and financial aspects. In Canada, to be duly constituted, all REBs comply with the Tri-Council Policy Statement on Ethical Research Involving Humans (TCPS). REBs are also called institutional review boards (IRB), independent review boards (IRB), or in countries such as the UK, they are called ethics committees.

**Research projects<sup>4</sup>:** An undertaking which involves a systematic investigation to establish facts, principles, or generalizable knowledge.

Within the ARECCI framework, research projects refer to projects that involve human participants or their information with primary purpose of contributing to the body of knowledge or the science on a topic. Research projects are required to undergo ethics review by a recognized REB prior to involving human participants or accessing their personal information.

**Second opinion review:** Review by an individual with advanced training in project ethics, who has no vested interest in the outcome of the project.

**Risk:** Potential for adverse consequences or harm constituting a negative impact on individuals, groups, or the environment. Risks are usually considered something to be controlled and minimized if they cannot be eliminated.

**Service providers:** The people who deliver a health or human service.

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<sup>4</sup> Source: Canadian Institutes of Health Research, Natural Sciences and Engineering Research Council of Canada, Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada, Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans. 1998 (with 2000, 2002, 2005 and 2010 amendments)