Guidelines for Research Advertising Content

The IRB must review and approve all advertisements that will be used to recruit subjects to participate in a specific research study. This includes, but is not limited to, flyers, pamphlets, postcards, posters, internet/online ads (e.g., PI’s website, Craigslist, UT Events, Facebook, etc.), and radio or video/tv ads. To avoid multiple requests for review and approval, investigators should specify in their original request all advertising formats that are anticipated.

Generally, advertisements used to recruit research subjects should be limited to information that a potential subject would need to determine if they are eligible and interested in participating. The IRB will review the proposed advertising to assure that it is not unduly coercive and does not promise a certainty of benefit, safety, or effectiveness beyond what is outlined in the informed consent document and the protocol. This is especially important when a study may involve vulnerable populations.

The ads should include information such as:

- the name and address of the research facility;
- the condition or disease that will be the focus of the research;
- the purpose of the research with reference to the fact that the study is investigational;
- a summary of criteria for eligibility to participate;
- the time and other commitments that will be required of the subject;
- the location of the study and the office to contact for further information; and
- all ads must include the statement: This study has been approved by The University of Texas at Austin Institutional Review Board.

The ads should not:

- contain explicit or implicit claims of safety and efficacy or equivalency or superiority to other approved treatments;
- emphasize the amount of reimbursement or compensation that subjects will receive (e.g., images that emphasize money, or bold or larger font);
- promise a favorable outcome or benefits; nor
- promise “free medical treatment,” when the intent is only to say subject will not be charged for taking part in the study.