What Should You Consider When Conducting Research Abroad?

When designing protocols for research conducted outside of the U.S., investigators should consider the following:

• local customs
• local cultural and religious norms
• local regulations and laws impacting human subject protections

To better anticipate these considerations, it is recommended that investigators consult with an individual who understands the culture or area of the planned research setting. Be sure to talk to an individual who has experience with the groups you plan to study, if available.

Additionally, PIs may refer to resources listed on the following web page:

http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/special_topics/international_research.html

For more information, refer to “Transnational Research” (Section 14) in the Policies and Procedures Manual:

http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/humansubjects/forms/irb_policies_and_procedures.pdf

Did You Know That Signatures from Subjects Are Not Always Required?

The following are typical examples in which an investigator may obtain informed consent from subject(s) without requiring a written signature.

• Interviews in contexts and cultures in which signing documents is considered inappropriate.
• Research in populations with low literacy.
• Research on sensitive topics or incriminating behavior.
• Interviews that are not conducted face-to-face, e.g., Skype, instant messaging, email, etc.
• Anonymous surveys.
• Surveys distributed online, therefore obtaining a physical signature is impractical.

Contact your IRB Program Coordinator to determine if a waiver of documented consent is appropriate for your study.

Upcoming Educational Workshop

The Office of Research Support hosts frequent educational sessions and workshops to assist you with working with the IRB. The next session is:

Date: May 2, 2012
Topic: Step-by-Step: How to Write & Submit an IRB Proposal & Application

For more information and registration, visit http://www.utexas.edu/research/rsc/news/