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NCS ADJUNCT STUDIES

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Adjunct Studies Overview



NCS will serve as a platform upon which to build additional scientific studies.

Investigators from various sectors are encouraged to propose (and obtain approval for) adjunct studies.

Such studies will enhance the breadth, depth, and value of the NCS and will assure continued interest of a diverse group of investigators.

To protect the quality and integrity of the NCS, adjunct studies will be reviewed and approved by a rigorous process.

Adjunct studies will generally require outside funding.



Key Characteristics



- Modular, focused studies utilizing NCS infrastructure: participants and/or environmental samples and/or biospecimens (but not simply a request for access to existing data)
- Involves a subset of the NCS cohort
- Initiated by a Study Center, government scientists, independent investigators, industry, etc.
- Outside funding
- Requests for *data only* are not considered Adjunct Studies and should be submitted to the Data Use and Publications Subcommittee



Key Review Factors: For NCS Quality and Integrity



- Public health importance
- Scientific value
- ‘Fit’ with the NCS (priority exposure or outcome, sampling, tools, timing...)
- Availability and appropriate use of biospecimens & environmental samples
- Burden on participants and infrastructure
- Human subjects issues
- Peer review, IRB review, funding



Definitions



Outside-Initiated Additions to the Core Protocol:

Formal proposals initiated from outside the NCS protocol planning process that pertain to the entire cohort are considered modifications of or additions to the core protocol. These additions, once approved, will be incorporated into the core protocol through the core protocol planning process. If such proposals add cost to the Study, they will likely require outside funding, as with adjunct studies



Definitions



Internal Adjunct Studies:

In specific circumstances, the NCS may require, authorize, and fund specific adjunct studies (for a portion of the cohort) to be planned outside the core protocol planning process, yet funded with NCS funds. These are referred to as “Internal Adjunct Studies” to reflect internal direction, initiation, and funding despite external development.



Categories of Adjunct Studies



- Without direct interaction with human subjects
- With direct interaction with human subjects (with or without use of biospecimens and/or environmental samples)



Without direct interaction with human subjects



Studies may include analysis of any of the following:

- archived biologic specimens
- archived environmental samples
- current biologic specimens
- current environmental samples



With direct interaction with human subjects (with or without use of bio-specimens and/or environmental samples)



- “minimal risk” research (Federal Guidelines 45CFR46.404–406), e.g. observational studies, questionnaires
- “more than minimal risk” research with no prospect of direct benefit
- intervention research (with prospect of direct benefit) as an embedded case-control study



Human Subjects Considerations



An adjunct study may or may not require separate informed consent from NCS participants. The adjunct study proposal must reflect the applicant's assessment as to whether or not specific informed consent is required for that project. The review process will assess this as well. When informed consent is required, the adjunct study informed consent document will clearly identify this adjunct study as additional to the core NCS and will clearly inform participants of the voluntary nature of participation in this portion of the NCS.



Review and Approval Process



- Brief electronic Preliminary Application. Full Application after approval of Preliminary Application
- Access via NCS website
- Tech support is available
- Adjunct Studies Review Group: Chair - Marion Balsam
- Sample Oversight Group: Chair -Jack Moye
- ‘Rolling’ review



Review Process



- The NCS Program Office/Research Partnerships Program Director (Dr. Marion Balsam) coordinates a formal process for review and approval of all adjunct studies.
- This is a two-tier process with evaluation first of a brief Preliminary Application which, if it appears to be an appropriate adjunct study proposal, is then followed by a more in-depth Full Application.
- Several aspects of review will occur simultaneously to the extent possible in order to facilitate timeliness of review. (Requests for just de-identified data do not fall within the Adjunct Studies purview.)



Review Process (cont.)



To assure the quality and integrity of the proposed study and to assess impact on the core Study and on the participants, specific areas of review include but are not limited to:

- Scientific merit
- Scientific relevance and “fit” with the Study
- Burden to participants and to the Study infrastructure
- Use of precious biospecimens and environmental samples
- Risk other human subjects issues.



Review Process (cont.)



Highest priority shall be given to studies that:

- (1) relate to and enhance the core NCS objectives;
- (2) have strong scientific and public health merit;
- (3) have potential for positive impact on healthcare practice or policy;
- (4) produce minimal burden on Study participants and do not unduly complicate or compromise the NCS;
- (5) require the unique characteristics of the NCS cohort such that there is mutual benefit.



Review Process (cont.)



- Upon NCS approval of the Full Application, documentation of that approval will be provided to assist proposers in seeking funding.
- Final approval to initiate the adjunct study will be contingent upon assurance of funding and completion of required “outside” reviews (e.g. IRBs, peer review) as indicated.



Review Process (cont.)



- The areas of review on the NCS Adjunct Study Application form largely mirror the major areas in NIH Research Grant applications.
- The adjunct study application allows for "cutting and pasting" relevant portions of those grant applications in order to minimize work.
- Funding details will be requested only after the proposal application is approved.



Review Process (cont.)



The NCS (Program Office) Adjunct Studies Team shall work with investigators proposing adjunct studies to enhance opportunity for success of proposals.

The Adjunct Studies Team shall monitor the status of adjunct study applications, completion of appropriate reviews and documentation, receipt of funding, and initiation of the project. Progress reports will be required periodically from each adjunct study Principal Investigator.



Participation of NCS Investigators as Co-Investigators



Every adjunct study requires the participation of a NCS investigator as a co-investigator. This person's essential role is to ensure accountability to the Study for that specific adjunct study's use of Study participants, data, bio-specimens, and/or environmental samples.

Study co-investigators include Study Center PIs (or designated senior member of their NCS team), or Program Office or Interagency Coordinating Committee (ICC) members.

The Study investigator must be designated as a co-investigator of the adjunct study. When an adjunct study is based at a particular Study Center or Centers, the Center PI (or designee) will generally serve as the Study co-investigator for that adjunct study. If >one location, an adjunct study 'Facilitator' will be at each site (to assist the NCS Co-I)



Participation of NCS Investigators as Co-Investigators



At the time of submission, some applicants may not know which Study Center(s) or Study co-investigators are most appropriate as collaborators for that proposal. Identifying or contacting a specific Study Center(s) and/or a potential Study co-investigator are not required prior to application submission.

If proposers have a specific Study Center(s) and/or Study co-investigator in mind, they are encouraged to contact that Center or individual about the proposal early in the process of developing the proposal. As part of the review and approval process, a Center(s) and Study co-investigator will be mutually agreed upon.



Data Access and Publications



- As part of the full application, the proposer must agree to comply with NCS policies and procedures regarding data access and use as well as publication procedures.
- Access to adjunct study participants, relevant data, bio-specimens, and/or environmental samples will be limited to that which is specifically pertinent to and authorized for the approved adjunct study.



Timing



- The current timeline calls for the Vanguard Centers to enroll participants during the spring of 2009, and for the Vanguard pilot phase to span from spring 2009 to summer 2010. Early adjunct studies will pertain to those participants enrolling after completion of that pilot year. At this time it may be reasonable to consider Adjunct Studies for the pre-conception, pregnancy, newborn and early infancy time frames.
- Applications for adjunct studies are available on the NCS website. The Tech Support Team is available to answer technical questions about filling out and submitting the electronic application.



Planning for Adjunct Studies



- **During the Full Study, not the VC pilot phase**
- **Investigators should review the core protocol for the applicable time period and the data access and confidentiality, publication, and laboratory policies prior to submitting an application.**
- **Submit only proposals with ~study &/or sample onset within the period of the developed protocol**
- **Upon approval, NCS resource commitment is for 1 year from time of approval to acquisition of funds and required approvals (IRB, etc.). Then reassess.**
- **Application expected to be on line June '09. Review expected to begin November '09**



NCS ADJUNCT STUDIES



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Adjunct Studies Overview and Application

www.NationalChildrensStudy.gov

(under the Research tab)

