The ANPRM
--A Contrarian Perspective--

Greg Koski, PhD, MD, CPI (Honorary)
Associate Professor, Harvard Medical School
Senior Scientist, Mongan Institute for Health Policy
Former Director, Office for Human Research Protections
Co-Founder, Alliance for Clinical Research Excellence and Safety

Objectives
- To consider the current HHS ANPRM regarding proposed revisions to the Common Rule in light of history and the current environment
- To briefly comment on the merits and challenges of the proposals contained therein and the assumptions upon which they are based
- Consider alternative models that may be less intrusive, more efficient and equally effective

It’s that time, again…
- 1974 National Commission for the Protection of Human Subjects of Biomedical and Behavioral Research
- 1980 President’s Commission for the Study of Ethical Problems in Biomedical and Behavioral Research
- 1994 Advisory Committee on Human Radiation Experiments
- 1995 National Bioethics Advisory Commission
And again…


And again…

- 2002 HHS ANPRM, Institutional Review Boards: Requiring Sponsors and Investigators to Inform IRBs of Any Prior IRB Reviews (withdrawn in 2006; “IRB Shopping is not a significant problem”)

Mantra or Mandate?

“As our nation invests in science and innovation and pursues advances in biomedical research and health care, it's imperative that we do so in a responsible manner.”

—President Barack Obama
The ANPRM: Talking the Talk

- Human Subjects Research Protections: Enhancing Protections for Research Subjects and Reducing Burden, Delay, and Ambiguity for Investigators
- “Revisions to the current human subjects regulations are being considered because OSTP and HHS believe these changes would strengthen protections for research subjects.”

The ANPRM: Walking the Walk?

- “Addressing these considerations now is timely and consistent with the President’s Executive Order requiring Federal agencies to review existing significant regulations to determine whether they should be modified, streamlined, expanded, or repealed to make the agency’s regulatory program more effective or less burdensome in achieving the regulatory objective.”

The Missing OIG Report?

IRBs: A Time for Reform

- Recast federal IRB requirements to grant IRBs greater flexibility and hold them more accountable for results.
- Strengthen continuing protections for human subjects participating in research.
- Enact Federal requirements that help ensure that investigators and IRB members are adequately educated about and sensitized to human-subject protections.
**The Missing OIG Report?**  
*IRBs: A Time for Reform*

- Help insulate IRBs from conflicts that can compromise their mission in protecting human subjects.
- Recognize the seriousness of the workload pressures that many IRBs face and take actions that aim to moderate them.
- Reengineer the Federal oversight process.

**The Current ANPRM:**  
Seven Proposed Changes

1. Refinement of Risk-Based Protections
2. Streamlining IRB Review of Multi-Site Studies
3. Improving Consent Forms/Process
4. Strengthening Data Protections to Minimize Information Risks
5. Improve Data Collection to Enhance System Oversight
6. Extension of Scope of the Federal Regulations
7. Clarifying and Harmonizing Regulatory Requirements and Agency Guidance

**Refinement of Risk-Based Protections**

- All steps taken to protect human subjects should be commensurate with the probability and severity of the potential risks associated with the research.
- A major problem is that the available flexibility is not utilized—reactive hyper-protectionism persists!
- There is no “Excuse” for changing the names of the categories— we must use available review and oversight processes more effectively.
Streamlining IRB Review of Multi-Site Studies

- If there is only going to be one review, it had better be a good one!
- Accreditation is a potentially valuable tool/solution, but
- Is it good enough?
- Will investigators, institutions and sponsors use it?
- Can “IRB shopping” be prevented?

Improve Consent Forms/Process

- Duh?! Of course, this is a good idea, but
  - Can further government interference and regulation fix the problem?
  - Prescription, proscription and preemption?
  - What about compliance and oversight?
- The consent form *per se* should be not more than 1-2 pages long and include only essential information—all details should be included in an attached description of the study, risks and potential benefits.
- The focus should be on informed consent, not the consent form!

Strengthening Data Protections to Minimize Information Risks

- Perhaps the most innovative and potentially useful/effective proposal of the lot
  - It could be very helpful if properly executed;
  - Education and certification will be needed;
  - Electronic “wizards” might be helpful;
  - Need for prospective review not eliminated
- Investigators and institutions must be held accountable;
- There must be appropriate oversight and significant penalties for non-compliance
- Registration without prospective review—you don’t wanna go there! (Or do you?)
Improve Data Collection to Enhance System Oversight

- This was a good idea when it was proposed a decade ago
  - It is still a good idea!
  - Addresses needs on multiple levels
- Real protections could be enhanced by proper data-sharing and monitoring
  - A question of priorities
  - Protections for human subjects
  - Protections for "proprietary information"

Extension of Scope of the Federal Regulations

- A no brainer!
  - Will be met with resistance at every turn!
- Needs to go even further; should include all human research regardless of source of funding
  - Likelihood of adoption strengthened by revelation of Guatemalan STD Studies
  - Likelihood of adoption weakened by current political climate

Clarify and Harmonize Regulatory Requirements and Agency Guidance

- Unclear and/or conflicting guidance is worse than no guidance at all
- To ‘harmonize’ is a euphemism for failure to standardize
- The Common Rule was itself an effort to achieve this goal
- Some argue that the Common Rule is now the single greatest impediment to the goal
Clarify and Harmonize Regulatory Requirements and Agency Guidance

- The Common Rule should be scrapped in favor of a single Federal oversight office for all human research.
- The office should be created by executive order and placed within the Office for Science and Technology Policy.
- Its charter must protect it from political and corporate influence with its actions overseen by a standing equivalent of the National Bioethics Commission and the Government Accountability Office.

The ANPRM: Too Much or Too Little, Too Late?

- The ANPRM is yet another attempt to tweak a system that is based on flawed assumptions and failed processes.
- Radical change, not incremental and marginal change is necessary.
- The responsibility for preventing harm and protecting the interests and well-being of research subjects should be vested in those who do the research—sponsors, institutions and investigators, not ethics committees.

Protections for Human Subjects?

- Rules and regulations, in and of themselves, do not, and cannot, protect human subjects from the risks and potential harms of research.
- Neither should rules and regulations deprive individuals and society of the potential benefits of research.
- The current compliance-focused approach may be doing more harm than good...what evidence shows that it is effective?
Ah, yes, the joy of air travel….

In light of recent events, there is a need to protect airline passengers from potential harm….

Gels and liquids may pose a threat to safety and precautions must be taken to reduce risk!
Which poses the greatest risk?

Are we any safer now?

“Study questions effectiveness of TSA’s practices”

- A study conducted by a team at the Harvard School of Public Health found no evidence that making travelers take their shoes and belts off at security checkpoints or banning large containers of liquid items actually prevented any incidents.

Linos et al. BMJ, 2007;335: 1290-1292
Study questions effectiveness of TSA’s practices

- The study concluded *there is no evidence* that the extra security measures the Transportation Security Administration adopted in recent years in an attempt to beef up security *actually increase the safety of the passengers* and has not made air travel any safer.
- If subjected to a critical evaluation as a prevention program, it would likely fail and is not cost-effective.

Just doing their jobs...

A message from the research community

"the lack of empirical evidence on the role of REB/IRB review in protecting human subjects “fosters skepticism” about the value of the review among investigators subject to the review."

In the absence of empirical evidence regarding the quality of IRB/REB review, those interviewed said they rely heavily on the integrity of the researchers and professed a cultural norm that the integrity of researchers not be questioned.

“In addition, respondents reported that they have little trust in the review conducted by IRBs/REBs at other institutions.”
Doing the right thing...but differently!

- "Integrity is doing the right thing, even if nobody is watching." --Unknown
  - Having someone watching sometimes makes it easier to avoid temptation
- "Insanity: doing the same thing over and over again and expecting different results." - Albert Einstein
  - Perhaps this is a time to adopt a completely new approach that will foster the behaviors we desire.

Is there a better way?

- Adopt a new approach based upon professionalism
  - Being allowed to do research with/on human subjects is a privilege that must be earned through rigorous training and objectively validated expertise, as is currently the case in both medicine and psychology
  - Credentialing and privileges should be risk and performance based and
  - All research activities should be subject to peer oversight and review, as well as public scrutiny and disclosure; transparency is key!

Change the Role of the IRB from Review and Approve to Responsible Oversight

- All research proposals must address all relevant safety and ethical concerns
- The investigator should bear primary responsibility for ethical conduct and risk mitigation strategies in his/her research
- All research would be subject to review by an IRB or its designated agent at any time
- Investigators who fail to meet their responsibilities lose their privileges to do research
- Investigators, institutions and sponsors are held accountable for their actions
A Performance-Focused Professional Approach
to Responsible Conduct of Human Research

Professionalism

Education and Training  Credentialing and Oversight

Investigation  Evaluation  Consultation  Validation

Compliance Domain  Performance Domain

Excellence and Trust