RAPP

RESEARCH APPROVALS PROCESSES PROJECT

Streamlining Research Approvals Processes Across BC's Health Authorities

Project Overview

The Research Approvals Processes Project (RAPP) is a joint Ministry of Health / Health Authority initiative to standardize and coordinate research approvals for multi-site research studies. The project seeks to improve the timeliness of health research in BC, to increase BC's competitiveness as an environment to conduct research leading to improvements in care quality, patient opportunity to participate in research, retention of skilled personnel, and economic growth in the province.

Background

The majority of health research in BC takes place in health authority sites including hospitals, long-term care facilities, and community sites and programs. All research taking place within a health authority requires health authority approval. This approval is designed to ensure patient safety, privacy, and data, as well as ensuring the health authority has the capacity to support the research occurring in its facilities.

In BC there are 5 regional health authorities as well as an affiliated health care organization (Providence Health Care), the Provincial Health Services Authority, and the First Nations Health Authority. Although health authorities are guided by the same legislation and requirements, each health authority has unique local processes to approve studies. This can make obtaining study approvals challenging and lengthy when they are occurring across multiple health authorities. Historically, most of the effort to streamline and standardize approvals has focused on the ethics approval, with a harmonized ethics model advanced by Research Ethics BC in partnership with the health authorities. However, delays can occur across multiple processes including data access requests, privacy reviews and study agreements.

The unique requirements and processes in place across the health authorities contribute to delays in research approvals, cost to researchers due to time needed to complete and update applications, and in some cases postponement or cancellation of planned research.

Process

Initial information to inform the project components and approach was gathered via multiple methods: an international literature review, a jurisdictional scan including all Canadian provinces and other countries, interviews with individuals working in BC's health research approvals space, and large group engagement sessions primarily with health authority staff in the targeted project areas.

This led to the development of the project components and deliverables. Each deliverable is being advanced by a topic-specific Subject Matter Expert group, focused on reviewing, advising and refining initial drafts based on successful approaches pulled from the initial review, workshops and the key informant interviews. This will be followed by testing using case studies, before being implemented in the health authorities, beginning with a transition period.