

Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)
ETHICS APPROVAL FOR CASE REPORTS/SERIES¹ FOR
CONFERENCE PRESENTATIONS:
Guidance for researchers/clinicians/students

Why do we need ethics approval for conference presentations?

Case reports and case series typically obtain ethics approval through expedited review of the final case report/series manuscript to be submitted for publication, accompanied by signed informed consent from the patient/s involved. However, clinicians/researchers often wish to present interesting case reports/series at scientific meetings/conferences before the publication is finalised or with no subsequent intention to publish.

Since 2020, many conferences have moved to online or hybrid platforms, resulting in presentations being recorded and often also becoming available in the public domain, not only to conference delegates. As a result, there is a growing trend of conference organisers requiring ethics approval to ensure that patient data has appropriate consent and is presented in an ethically acceptable manner.

To support this need, the HREC case report/case series application now provides for the submission and approval of conference presentations. This option may be of benefit to those who require ethics approval for a conference submission and to all who wish to follow good ethical principles for presenting patient data in a public forum.

When is ethics approval for a conference presentation needed?

At present it is not compulsory to obtain ethics approval for case report/series conference presentations unless required by the conference. However, presenters are encouraged to obtain ethics approval even if it is not required by the conference organisers in the interests of good practice. Ethics approval should be sought for all case report/series conference presentations that have not yet been published or for which there is no intention to publish.

What needs to be submitted?

The HREC office accepts new case reports/series for conference presentations at any time, in line with scheduled submission dates.

¹ HREC distinguishes between case reports and case study methodology with case reports being “Observations are made of one patient with an interesting disease profile, before and after an intervention but with no control group.”

The application for ethics approval of a case report/case series for presentation at a conference will follow the same process as a case report/case series submission and should be accompanied by the following documentation:

1. Submission of an application for a case report/series, clearly marked in the application form as “for conference presentation” to the Health Research Ethics committee (HREC) via Infonetica© Ethics RM system;
2. Informed consent form for a case report/series as signed by the individual patient /participant (Kindly refer to the **updated consent form template** [embedded below] for case reports/case series];



Consent Form For
Case Reports_HREC T

3. A full draft of the presentation that is to be presented (either as a narrative MS Word or PowerPoint document, or both);
4. Head of Division signature;
5. A cover letter, providing details of the conference, context to presentation: the consent process, the position of the applicant (in relation to the patient(s)/participant(s), and the information to be presented at the conference (narrative – if not appended to submission).

Post submission guidance

- (a) HREC can only approve a case report/series conference presentation, as submitted, as conference presenters often make edits/revisions to the final presentation and add information during the verbal presentation.
- (b) Once the submission has been reviewed, a notification of HREC ethics approval will be sent to the applicant.
- (c) Kindly note that the approval of the conference presentation does not extend to the publication of the presentation. The approval of a case report as a journal publication, will require separate submission of the draft manuscript for review. Should the applicant wish to publish the case report/case series, an amendment to the original application can be submitted to HREC.