When should I apply to the Health Research Ethics Committee (HREC)?

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- To prevent significant delays caused by submitting an ethics application to the wrong REC, we strongly recommend exercising caution. If there is even a 5% chance that any of the following ten points apply to your research, please send your research proposal to ethics@sun.ac.za for a pre-consultation with the HREC.
- Additionally, please copy the following three HREC coordinators in your email:
  - Ms Brightness Nxumalo
  - Contact: 021 938 9207 / brightness@sun.ac.za
  - Ms Elvira Rohland
  - Contact: 021 938 9677 / elr@sun.ac.za
  - Ms Siti Kabanda
  - Contact: 021 938 9989 / siti@sun.ac.za
- The approval process at the HREC takes approximately 10 – 12 weeks.
- Please send an email to ethics@sun.ac.za regarding the annual HREC submission deadlines.
- NB: If none of the following ten points apply (scroll down), you may submit an application to the REC: SBE.

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1. The research involves the study of human movement, the design and testing of prosthetics and orthotics, and the analysis of how mechanical forces impact bodily functions and structures. Examples include research on joint mechanics, the design of artificial limbs, the impact of physical activity on musculoskeletal health, and the development of ergonomic tools and equipment. If the research includes significant elements related to social and behavioural factors, such as the psychological effects of using prosthetics or the social integration of individuals with prosthetics, it would be assigned to appropriate reviewers, like an orthopaedic surgeon, sports scientist, or rehabilitation specialist, along with a reviewer from a social science background. At the discretion of the HREC, the study could be considered for joint review between HREC and REC: SBE.

2. The research involves the testing and consumption, by human panel members, of products, drinks or food stuffs, which have been enhanced by additives not usually found in the food product.

3. The research involves interaction with (or observation of) patients in a clinical setting, such as a healthcare facility, clinic or hospital.

4. The research targets individuals diagnosed with a medical, healthcare, psychiatric or physical condition, where the purpose of the research is to study the condition itself, and/or test interventions that could improve the condition or the quality of life of the participant. The individuals could be diagnosed with an acute or chronic medical condition, for which they are receiving treatment, or require constant medical care or observation by a physician or medical specialist.

5. The research will require participants to undergo health screening or tests, or take part in physical exercise, exercise stress tests, or biokinetic assessments.

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6. The research involves the testing of pharmaceuticals, devices, interventions, surgical or medical procedures, technologies or devices to improve health and healthcare.

7. The research involves the development of new methods for prevention, diagnosis, and treatments via drugs or therapies for various health conditions. Examples include the sampling of human biological materials (i.e. blood or tissue samples will be collected or analysed), research on cancer cell biology, the development of vaccines, the study of genetic disorders, and the testing of new pharmaceutical drugs.

8. The research involves the development and testing of a diagnostic app. Examples include measuring the intensity of a cough for diagnostic purposes, or apps to assist with adherence.

9. The researcher requires access to (identifiable and/or anonymised) patient records, and/or other medical records, for retrospective review and analysis.

10. The researcher is accessing secondary data from participants for disease modelling.