FHREB ANNUAL REPORT: 2024-2025

Introduction

The Fraser Health Research Ethics Board (FHREB) is established and empowered under the authority of the VP responsible for Research to review and approve all research involving human participants in Fraser Health jurisdiction and/or under Fraser Health auspices, as defined by the Fraser Health Research Policy, prior to the initiation of any research related procedures.

In accordance with the Fraser Health Policy on Ethical Conduct of Research and Other Studies Involving Humans and the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS 2), the FHREB is required to provide an annual report of activities conducted to the Fraser Health Board of Directors.

Authority & Purpose

The purpose of the FHREB is to protect the rights and welfare of human participants enrolled in research. The FHREB reviews and oversees the research to ensure that it meets ethical principles and that it complies with all applicable regulations and guidelines pertaining to human participant protection. These include, but are not limited to, the Food and Drugs Act and applicable Regulations, the International Council on Harmonization Good Clinical Practice Guidelines, the Declaration of Helsinki: Ethical Principles for Medical Research Involving Human Subjects, the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans, and where applicable, US Federal Regulations.

The FHREB has the authority to ensure that all research conducted under its oversight is designed and conducted in such a manner that it protects the rights, welfare, and privacy of research participants.

Specifically, the FHREB has the authority to:

- Establish the ethics review processes, and provide research ethics oversight to ensure the ethical conduct of the research,
- Approve, require modifications to, or disapprove, any research activity that falls within its jurisdiction,

- Ensure that the researcher has policies and procedures to protect the rights, safety and welfare of research participants,
- Request, receive and share any information involving the research that the REB considers necessary to fulfill its mandate, while maintaining confidentiality and respecting privacy,
- Conduct continuing ethical review to protect the rights and welfare and privacy of research participants,
- Suspend or terminate the ethics approval for the research,
- Place restrictions on the research,
- Take any actions considered reasonably necessary, and consistent with policies and procedures, to ensure the protection of the rights, safety, and well-being of participants in research conducted under the FHREB's jurisdiction.

Board composition & administrative supports

As of March 31, 2025, the FHREB was composed of 12 members.

VOTING MEMBER NAME FIRST LAST	HIGHEST DEGREES EARNED	PRIMARY SCIENTIFIC OR NONSCIENTIFIC SPECIALTY	AFFILIATION WITH INSTITUTION
*Stephen Pearce Male / Canadian Citizen	MD, FRCPC	Cardiology	Yes
*Lindsay Meredith Male / Canadian Citizen	PhD	Business, Ethics	No
** Anu K. Sandhu Female/Canadian Citizen	LLB	Law	No
** Tamsin Miley Female / Canadian Citizen	LLB	Law	No
Zhenyi Li Male / Canadian Citizen	PhD	Community Member	No
Kim Macfarlane Female / Canadian Citizen	BSN, MA	Tertiary Critical Care, Ethics	No
Bonnie MacKenzie Female / Canadian Citizen	BA	Community Member	No
Tim Leung Male / Canadian Citizen	PharmD	Pharmacy	Yes
Mickaël Francoeur Male / Canadian Citizen	MD, FRCPC	Emergency Medicine	Yes
Sarah Crowe Female/ Canadian Citizen	MN, PMD-NP(F), CNCC(C)	Critical Care	Yes
Samantha Pollard Female/Canadian Citizen	PhD	Research Methodology	Yes
***Rochelle Gellatly Female/ Canadian Citizen	PharmD	Pharmacy	Yes
* Co-chair ** Alternating Member *** Alternate Member			

Administrative support for the FHREB is provided by 3.0 FTE position in the REB Office in the Department of Evaluation and Research Services (DERS): the Research Ethics & Compliance Manager, Research Ethics & Regulatory Specialist, and Research Ethics Coordinator. Additional support for the FHREB functions is provided by the DERS Program Assistant.

FHREB Education

Ongoing education for REB members was delivered through staff-led sessions during the regularly scheduled full board meetings as well as via provincial education sessions organized by Research Ethics BC (REBC).

- Review Considerations for Pregnant Partner Consent Forms 2024, May 08 (delivered by Soodi Jolaei)
- Clinical Research Ethics Symposium, 2024 December 3-4 (delivered by REBC)

The REB Office staff also provide ongoing education and training to researchers, including the following workshops:

- Research Ethics Workshop for Chilliwack General Hospital Family Practice Residents, 2024 May 16 (delivered by Soodi Jolaei)
- Research Ethics and Operational Approval Presentation for Surrey Memorial Internal Medicine Residents, 2024 June 27 (delivered by Sara O'Shaughnessy)
- Research Ethics Workshop for Surrey Memorial Hospital Family Practice Residents, 2024 July 25 (delivered by Soodi Jolaei)
- Research Ethics Workshop for the Department of Evaluation and Research Services on Artificial Intelligence and Research Ethics, 2024 August 21 (delivered by Sara O'Shaughnessy)
- Presentation on From Researcher to Reviewer: Insights from the Frontlines of Ethical Research at the Canadian Association of Research Ethics Board Annual Conference, 2025 May 01 (delivered by Soodi Jolaei)

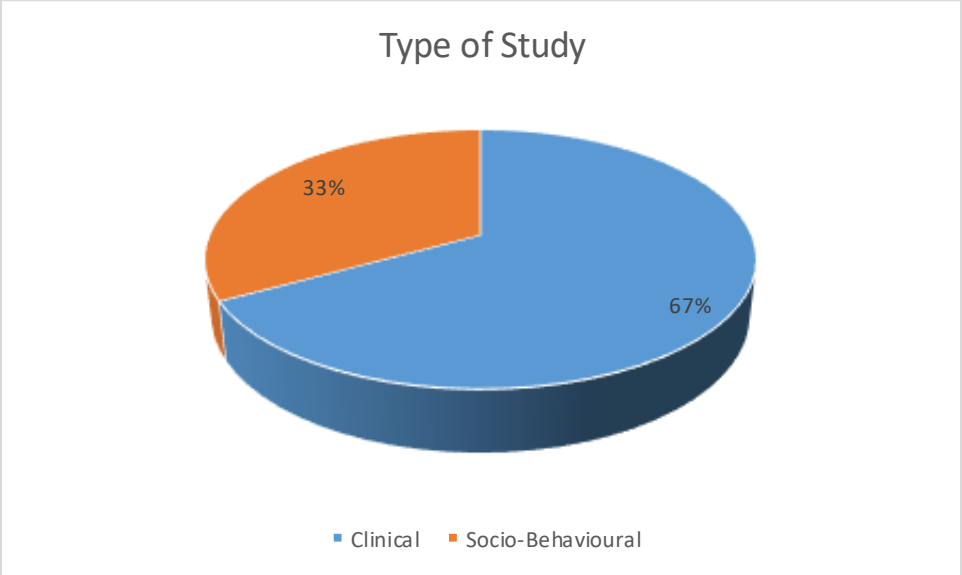
Research Ethics Harmonization

Multi-jurisdictional research and research in partnership with academic institutions and health authorities in BC accounts for the majority of research submitted for review to the FHREB. REBC provides support for the provincial, harmonized system for research ethics review of multi-jurisdictional studies involving humans from more than one BC institution, including facilitating the Provincial Research Ethics Platform (PREP). The FHREB is an active partner in this initiative, including representation by Sara O'Shaughnessy, Research Ethics & Compliance Manager, on the REBC Advisory Council, the Subject Matter Expert Committee on the BC Ministry of Health's Research

Approvals Process Project, and the Validation Tactical Committee for CANReview, which is a national initiative to adopt single review of Clinical Trials.

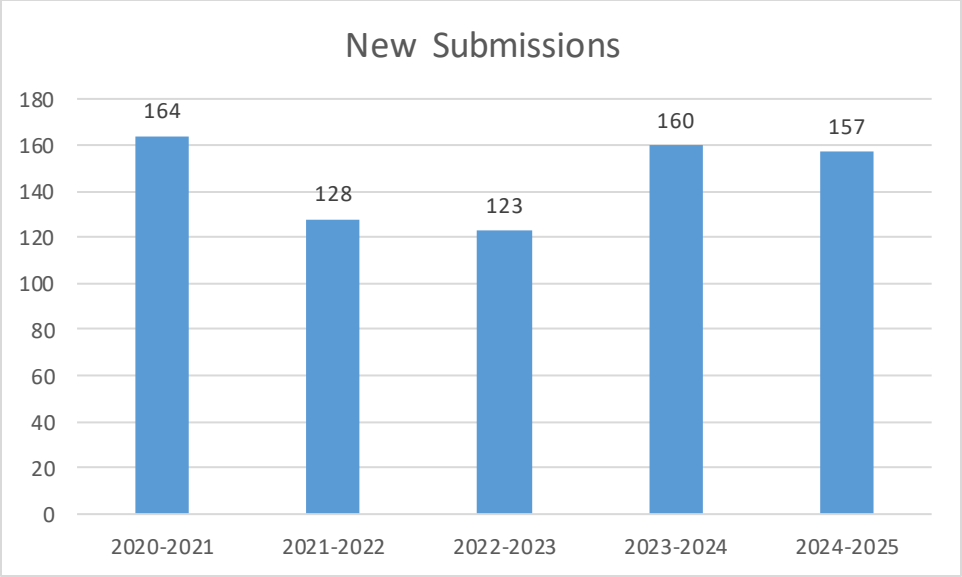
Number of active studies at the end of fiscal

At the end of the fiscal year, there were 486 FHREB approved studies, which represents a ten percent increase from the previous fiscal year (440). Sixty-seven percent of these studies were clinical in nature and 33 percent were socio-behavioural in nature. Clinical research is defined as studies with the goal of improving the diagnosis, and treatment (including rehabilitation and palliation), of disease and injury; and improving the health and quality of life of individuals as they pass through normal life stages. Behavioural research is defined as involving the study of human and social attitudes, beliefs, and behaviours in which no invasive procedures or measurements occur. Separate application forms exist for clinical and behavioural studies on both the Fraser Health ROMEO platform and the PREP platform to distinguish between submission types.



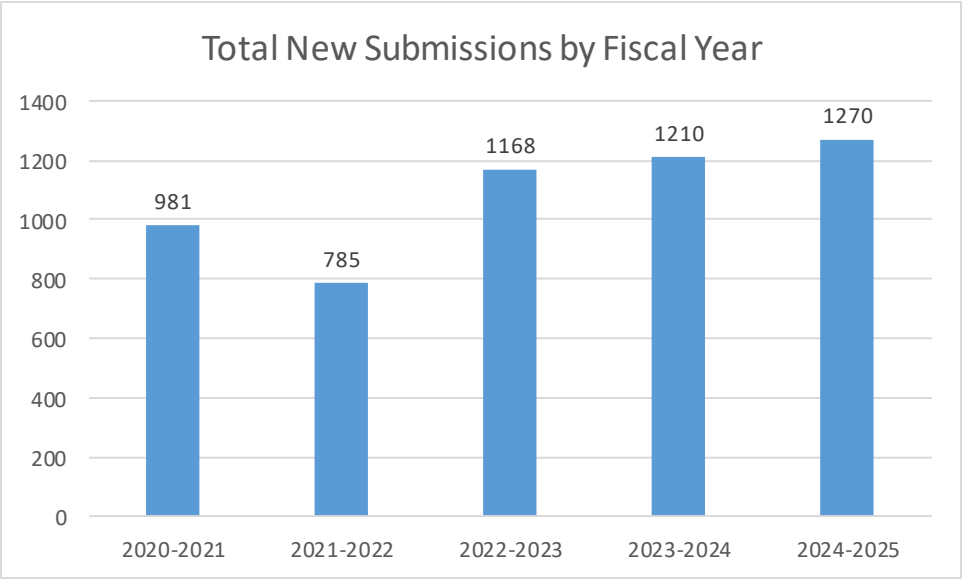
Demand for review

During the 2024-2025 fiscal year, the FHREB received 157 new submissions for review. Of these, 28 were reviewed by the full board. The number of new submissions is on par with the previous fiscal year (160 submissions with 27 reviewed at full board).



One hundred and two new submissions (65%) were submitted on the PREP platform, which is hosted on the UBC RISe system. Of these 102 new submissions, the FHREB served as the board of record (i.e. primary board responsible for the administration of the harmonized review) for 39 studies (38%). This represents a slight decrease from the previous fiscal year in which the FHREB served as board of record for 42% of the submissions.

Post-approval submissions also accounted for a significant portion of the demand for review. The FHREB received 487 requests for amendment, 358 requests for renewal, 184 requests for acknowledgement, and 84 requests for study close-out. The total number of review requests is 1270, which represents a five percent increase from the previous fiscal year.



Review timelines

The median timeline for submission of new studies to approval was 30.5 days. The median for studies submitted for harmonized review on the PREP platform was 30 days, and 31 days for new studies submitted on the ROMEO platform.

Initiatives & Successes

The FHREB's primary initiative of the 2024-2025 fiscal year was the expansion of the membership to ensure appropriate expertise, quorum, and succession planning. The board successfully recruited one new community member during this year. Other key achievements include launching new Guidance Notes for Student Research, Clinical Research Involving Pregnant Partners, and a revised consent form template for Clinical Research Involving Pregnant Partners.

Conclusion

The undersigned are pleased to confirm that the Fraser Health Research Ethics Board has been in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Conducting Research Involving Humans and other regulatory requirements, as applicable, for the 2024 to 2025 fiscal year. The FHREB approved the 2024-2025 annual report at its June 11, 2025 meeting.

Respectfully submitted,

Dr. Stephen Pearce

FHREB co-Chair

Professor Lindsay Meredith, PhD

FHREB co-Chair