Peer Review

Review of: "Does Accreditation Improve the Protection of Human Research Subjects and the Quality of Institutional Review Board Reviews?"

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This commentary provides a clear and timely overview of the history and role of accreditation in human research protections, raising important questions about its effectiveness. The author highlights performance metrics (e.g., adverse events, informed consent violations, unauthorized research, and lapses in continuing review) as ways to evaluate human subject protections, and points to compliance with Common Rule criteria and Belmont principles as markers of review quality. These are important starting points. However, quality in IRB review could also be assessed through additional dimensions, such as the consistency of IRB decisions across similar protocols, the depth of ethical reasoning in risk–benefit assessments, the thoroughness of informed consent evaluations, the timeliness of reviews, and the independence of board members from conflicts of interest. Including these considerations would expand the commentary's call for evaluation and make it more directly relevant to ongoing debates within the IRB community. The 2023 GAO report is also an essential touchstone for this discussion. It raised concerns about the absence of standardized measures for IRB quality, the lack of evidence that accreditation reduces noncompliance, and the burden accreditation imposes on resource-limited institutions. Addressing these findings directly would strengthen the argument and help situate the commentary within current policy debates, either reinforcing or refining the conclusion that accreditation's effectiveness remains unproven. Overall, this is a valuable and thought-provoking contribution that lays the groundwork for much-needed future research and debate. I commend the author for addressing such an important issue in research ethics and encourage them to expand the critical discussion in future work.

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Declarations

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