NEWFOUNDLAND AND LABRADOR
HREB
HEALTH RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

HREB ANNUAL REPORT 2025-26

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1. INTRODUCTION

The Health Research Ethics Board (HREB), appointed by the Health Research Ethics Authority (HREA), is responsible for the ethical review, approval and subsequent monitoring of applications for health research projects involving human subjects in Newfoundland and Labrador. Currently, there are three HREB subcommittees; one for clinical trials (HREB-CT), one for genetics and genomics research (HREB-GG) and one for all other health research (HREB-NCT).

As per the HREB Terms of Reference, the following annual report has been prepared for HREA Board of Directors.

2. MEMBERSHIP

Each subcommittee remained compliant with Article 6.4 of the *Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct of Research Involving Humans, 2nd edition (TCPS 2)* and consisted of:

a. at least two members with expertise in relevant research disciplines, fields and methodologies covered by the HREB;
b. at least one member knowledgeable in ethics;
c. at least one member knowledgeable in the relevant law, and
d. at least one community member who has no affiliation with the institution.

During the reporting period, the Health Research Ethics Act (HRE Act) 2025 came into force, replacing the Health Research Ethics Authority Act (2011). In accordance with section 8.2 of the HRE Act, the HREB has incorporated an additional membership requirement to include at least one member knowledgeable in privacy.

The HREB has taken steps to ensure alignment with this updated legislative requirement and will continue to maintain full compliance with both the HRE Act and TCPS 2 in its membership composition and review processes.

There was some turnover in the HREB membership throughout the fiscal year. The list of current HREB members is available on the HREA website under the HREB tab. The changes in membership between April 2025 and March 2026 were as follows:

New Members Added:

- Content Experts: 2
- Member to represent the general public: 2
- Member knowledgeable in privacy: 2
- Member knowledgeable in the law: 1

Member Resignations:

Content Experts: 2
Member to represent the general public: 3
Member knowledgeable in the law: 2

3. NEW APPLICATIONS

In the last fiscal year, the HREB adjudicated a total of 197 new research applications.

	HREB- CT	HREB- GG	HREB-NCT
Number of Applications Reviewed	47	4	146

4. CONTINUING REVIEW

Introduction: In the last fiscal year, the HREB adjudicated a grand total of 1502 events. The breakdown of these events is as follows:

Event	Quantity
Serious Adverse Event	32
Amendment	423
Ethics Renewal/ Study Close Out	501
Investigator Brochure/Product Monograph	80
Other Form	42
Protocol Deviation	78
Research Staff Change	286
Safety Report	60
TOTAL	1502

5. OPERATIONS

HREB meetings are scheduled biweekly and are facilitated via distance technologies. No HREB meetings are scheduled during Memorial University's winter holiday break, which occurred between December 24, 2025 to January 2, 2026. Accordingly, no HREB-CT, HREB-GG nor HREB-NCT meetings were scheduled for that period.

The meeting activity for the 2024-25 fiscal year was as follows:

	HREB- CT	HREB- GG	HREB-NCT
Total Meetings Scheduled	25	25	25
Total Meetings Canceled *	1	21	4
Total Meetings Held	24	4	21

**Meetings cancelled due to absence of studies requiring full Board review.*

6. CHAIR COMMENTS

This was another successful year thanks to the dedicated staff at the HREA/B office. A special thanks to Barb (Ethics Director), Alex and Stacey (Ethics Officers), and Kayla, Joan, and Shawna (doing the 'behind the scenes' administration). They consistently went above and beyond to keep the work of the REBs running efficiently. Their support and guidance to researchers, Board members, and of course to us Chairs has been most appreciated.

Of special note, we said a fond farewell to administrative staff member Joan Dalton, who retired in December 2025. Joan was our longest-running staff member; she had been with HREB since its inception and for many years before that was administrator to the former health research ethics board (HIC). Joan had been the bedrock of the HIC and was a key player in the transition from HIC to HREA. It is hard to imagine the HREB without her!

Related to that news, we have welcomed Shawna Foley to our administrative team with great delight!

As Chairs of the three REBs, we continue to be overwhelmed by the tremendous dedication of the volunteer researchers, clinicians, lawyers, and ethicists who comprise the review Boards. As we look back over the year, it is with appreciation and respect for these devoted volunteers. We cannot over-emphasise that any acclaim for successes the HREBs have seen over this past year must – as always – rest primarily with them.

Finally, on behalf of our team of Chairs, I want to acknowledge and thank Dr. Robert Mercer for taking over the helm of the NCT Board while I was on sabbatical for Winter term 2026. This was a big ask, and a big task, and I am grateful for how willingly and capably he filled in as Chair.

Fern Brunger (Chair, NCT) on behalf of Dr. Debra Bergstrom (Chair, GG), Dr. Peter Daley (Co-Chair, CT), and Dr. Joy Maddigan (Co-Chair, CT).

