You’re invited to join UM’s Institutional Review Board (IRB) for an on-site webinar. We’ll log in as a group from UH 004. This event is free and open to the public, but you must pre-register.

The webinar speaker will be Julie Simpson, Ph.D., director of research integrity services at the University of New Hampshire. Ms. Simpson will provide an introduction to qualitative research; discuss ethical challenges inherent in conducting and reviewing this type of research; and offer strategies to address them.

In qualitative inquiry, researchers study phenomena in their natural settings, where the purpose is contextualization, interpretation, and/or understanding the perspectives of others. The role of qualitative researchers in a study is characterized by personal involvement and empathetic understanding. The challenges specific to this research domain, for both researchers and institutional review boards (IRBs), include the emergent nature of qualitative research, a researcher’s relationships with research subjects, obtaining informed consent, and confidentiality and privacy.

Additionally, IRB members’ gaps in understanding qualitative inquiry may stand in the way of correctly identifying problematic aspects of a proposed study, or result in what is often viewed as inappropriate changes to the study design. Qualitative researchers are often frustrated by this perceived lack of understanding of qualitative inquiry. These gaps in understanding may also result in IRBs not correctly identifying problematic aspects of a proposed study. Further, qualitative researchers may not fully grasp the ethical concerns that their studies raise vis-à-vis human subjects protections, such as the potential effects of a researcher’s dual roles in a setting, or that informed consent is a process. They may also not understand how to mitigate such concerns and/or to communicate effectively with IRBs about how to address these challenges within the regulatory framework.

The goal of this webinar is to provide IRB members with a better understanding of the issues that qualitative researchers face and introduce strategies to address these issues while recognizing the unique characteristics of the qualitative research process. Topics for discussion will include:

- Differences between qualitative and quantitative research paradigms.
- Ethical issues that qualitative research methodologies may present to study participants.
- Strategies for IRB members and qualitative researchers to minimize harm to study participants.

Register by email to: irb@umontana.edu. For more information, call 243-6672.
Webinar Speaker:

Julie Simpson, PhD, is the director of research integrity services and affiliate assistant professor of college teaching at the University of New Hampshire (UNH). Julie oversees UNH’s human subject protections program and IRB operations. Additionally, she administers the institutional animal care and use committee (IACUC) and manages the responsible conduct of research (RCR) and scholarly activity programs at UHN. Julie staffs UNH’s disclosure review committee which oversees the financial conflict of interest in research program, which she co-administers. She co-teaches a cross-disciplinary graduate research ethics course at UNH.

Julie previously served as the project director for UNH for an Office of Research Integrity (ORI) grant to develop web-based RCR educational materials and administered UNH’s ORI/Council of Graduate School’s RCR grant. Julie’s interest in ethical issues in qualitative research resulted in her dissertation, *More than simply “hanging out”: The nature of participant observation and research relationships*. In this study, she interviewed researchers about their experiences conducting ethnographic research, focusing on their relationships with study participants.

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