

9 December 2025

Re: Ethics Approval linked to Gatekeeper permission

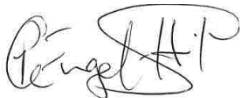
The National Health Research Ethics Council (NHREC) and the National Health Research Committee (NHRC) have been in discussion on the processing of ethics approval and gatekeeper permission. It seems there was some confusion and also inconsistency in how the RECs manage the process.

The NHREC and NHRC have reached agreement that a REC should give provisional approval (not full approval) and that this provisional approval should go to the sites/ gatekeeper e.g. Provincial Health Research Committee (PHRC) or private health facility. Once site permission is secured, the researcher must submit this back to the REC, and only then can full ethics approval be granted and the study commence. Note that the site/s granting permission for any study should be listed/named on the letter of ethics approval from the REC to avoid any misunderstanding.

This does not change the accepted processes with SAHPRA as they already accept provisional approval and make their decision providing they get the full approval submitted before the study starts.

I trust this communicate is helpful and removes any confusion. It is sent out to achieve a consistent procedure amongst all our RECs, to align with NDoH 2024 and to convey the procedure agreed to with the NHRC. If there are any further questions on the matter, please do not hesitate to write to the NHREC.

Penelope Engel-Hills



NHREC: Chairperson

cc NHRC
SAHPRA