

A note to all AMS students regarding Ethics requirements.

Dear AMS students,

This note is regarding a sometimes delicate matter: Ethics.

For many of you this will not apply, however, it is sent to everyone in order that those to whom it is relevant are made aware of the issue.

In some instances your supervisor may inform you that (a) ethics approval is “not needed” because the data is being collected as “part of a clinical audit”, or (b) that ethics approval is “not needed” at all.

Obtaining ethics approval has been a major cause of delays with AMS projects in general. You do not want to delay it further because you do not seek approval when it is actually required.

“Clinical Audits” of themselves generally do not require ethics approval, however the use of any patient’s data in a research project does require ethics approval. Not only this, your access (as a medical student undertaking research) to patient records, files, or data would normally also require approval.

Therefore, I recommend that if either of the above circumstances (a) or (b) exist, you should take the responsibility to ensure that all necessary ethics approvals have been obtained. If there is an ethics approval already, and it contains either direct or indirect reference to yourself as a student researcher, this issue is resolved.

If not you then need to deal with this issue. One straightforward strategy is to determine who is the head (chair) of the relevant ethics committee in your location/hospital, and make a time to meet them briefly, and then outline your project and your part in it, to ensure that ethics approval is indeed not required. This will avoid any later obstacles or delays should it be determined that you should have ethics approval.

With best wishes for your research year,

Stephen Farish
AMS Coordinator.