CHEER

Canadian Collaboration for Child Health: Efficiency and Excellence in the Ethics Review of Research

Collaboration pancanadienne pour la santé des enfants: Efficacité et excellence dans la révision éthique de la recherche

NEWSLETTER

The Canadian Collaboration for Child Health: Efficiency and Excellence in the Ethics Review of Research (CHEER) is a Canada-wide initiative on a mission to improve child health by streamlining research ethics review for child health research.

February 2026

Led by Clinical Trials Ontario (CTO) and the Maternal Infant Child and Youth Research Network (MICYRN), the goal of the CHEER project is to streamline the research ethics review process for multi-site child health studies across Canada with the aim of a single research ethics review.

CIHR IRSC
Canadian Institutes of Health Research
Instituts de recherche en santé du Canada

MICYRN
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Clinical Trials Ontario

CHEER ASSENT PROJECT

The CHEER assent materials are being launched this month! Join us for a webinar exploring assent in Canada with perspectives form a child health researcher and a parent with lived experiences.

FEB
18

Navigating Paediatric Assent in Canada

12:30 - 2:00 PM EST

REGISTER HERE

With Katie O’Hearn and Darlene Durand

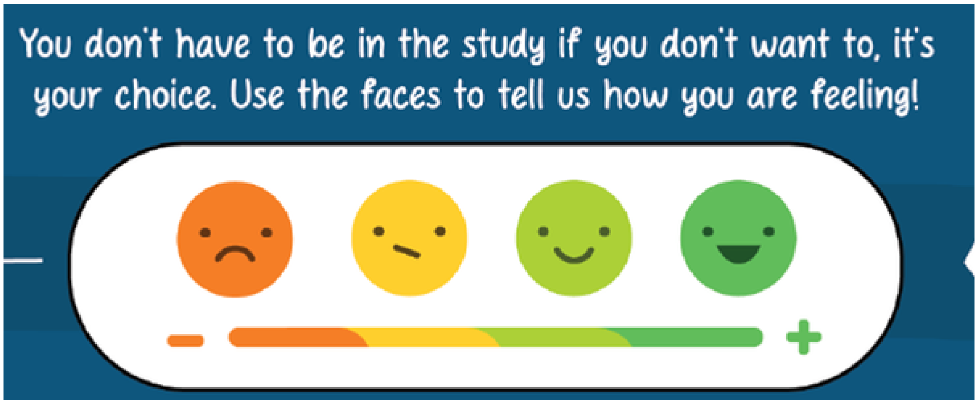
The assent materials have been designed to be engaging and fun for children to use. We hope they will serve as a tool during the assent conversation for building rapport and as an activity to help explain the study to children in a way that will keep children interested. Based on feedback from families that identified elements that were important to them, some elements will not be editable.

We will be launching:

- An adventure trail, intended for younger children to complete with an adult that provides information about the study along the way.
- A story booklet intended for older children to complete with or without an adult that includes activities and tells a story about the research.
- A visual study schedule, intended for children and their families to quickly identify study activities for a given visit. Similar to a typical study schedule this is intended to be more accessible to children and could also serve as a progress tracker for children to tick off activities or visits.
- Research: Unlocking Better Care, a brochure that is an introduction to research and provides a high level overview of what research is.

The study schedule was adapted from work by the Blueprint Translational Research Group (Ottawa Hospital Research Institute) and Patient Partners. The Research: Unlocking Better Care brochure will be available as a trifold leaflet, a digital leaflet and a waiting room screen version. This was adapted from work by the Language Barriers Project at BC Children’s Hospital. This has been translated into French, Inuktitut, and in collaboration with the Language Barriers Project, with more languages will be coming.

The materials are intended to be adaptable to the nature of the study and can be used in any way the study team feels is appropriate. One or all of the materials may be used for a study.

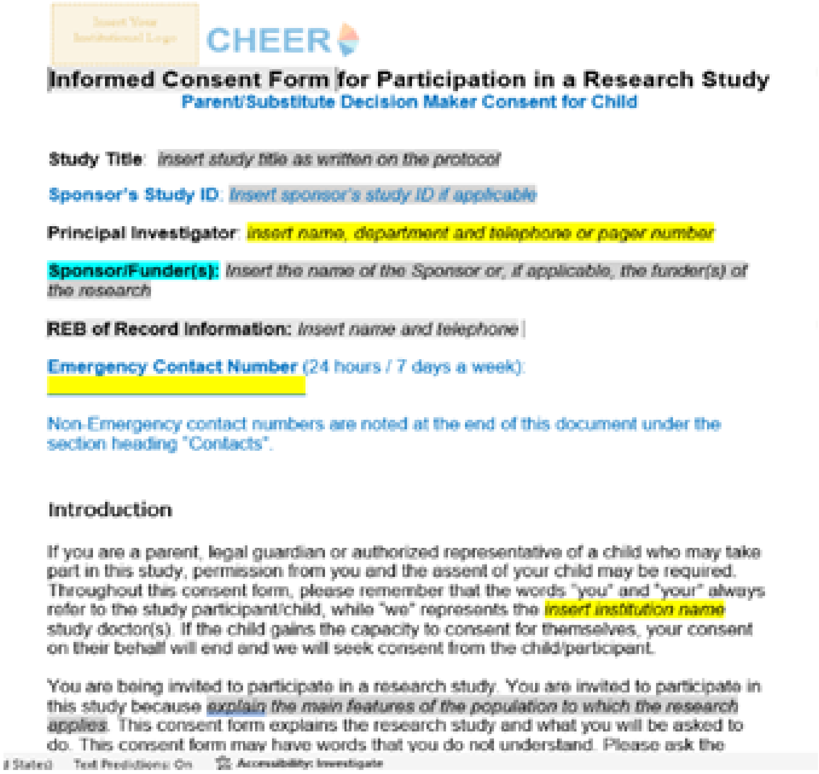

You don't have to be in the study if you don't want to, it's your choice. Use the faces to tell us how you are feeling!

"When families are asked to consider a clinical trial for their child, they are often doing so during one of the most overwhelming moments of their lives. Family-friendly materials that use clear language and inclusive visuals help families understand their options, ask informed questions, and feel respected as partners in the research process". Antonia Palmer, PFAC lead.

"Assent is essential in pediatric research because it respects a child's emerging autonomy and ensures they are an active participant in decisions that affect them. Child-focused assent materials are effective tools to support participant understanding in an accessible way. When we show child-participants we care enough to develop assent materials that meaningfully engage them, this also helps to foster trust in the research process." Sarah Tagliapietra, Research Ethics Manager, Research Ethics Board, CHEO.

They will be available on the CHEER website for use. We have created guidance documents with examples to help study teams use them. Please consider sharing these materials with colleagues and your institution. We welcome feedback and questions, please email cheer@queensu.ca.

As a reminder, the CHEER Interventional Consent Form Template is available on the CHEER website for any study teams wishing to use it, this template is accepted at major paediatric centres where legislation allows.



Insert Your Institutional Logo

CHEER

Informed Consent Form for Participation in a Research Study

Parent/Substitute Decision Maker Consent for Child

Study Title: *insert study title as written on the protocol*

Sponsor's Study ID: *Insert sponsor's study ID if applicable*

Principal Investigator: *insert name, department and telephone or pager number*

Sponsor/Funder(s): *Insert the name of the Sponsor or, if applicable, the funder(s) of the research*

REB of Record Information: *insert name and telephone*

Emergency Contact Number (24 hours / 7 days a week):

Non-Emergency contact numbers are noted at the end of this document under the section heading "Contacts".

Introduction

If you are a parent, legal guardian or authorized representative of a child who may take part in this study, permission from you and the assent of your child may be required. Throughout this consent form, please remember that the words "you" and "your" always refer to the study participant/child, while "we" represents the *insert institution name* study doctor(s). If the child gains the capacity to consent for themselves, your consent on their behalf will end and we will seek consent from the child/participant.

You are being invited to participate in a research study. You are invited to participate in this study because *explain the main features of the population to which the research applies*. This consent form explains the research study and what you will be asked to do. This consent form may have words that you do not understand. Please ask the

CROSS-PROVINCIAL CHEER STUDIES

We are absolutely thrilled to announce that CHEER has accepted it first industry sponsored phase 3 clinical trial with sites in 2 provinces. Not only is this a first for CHEER and significant achievement for streamlining ethics approvals in Canada, but a CHEER qualified REB that specializes in the study population agreed to serve as REB of Record, ensuring that the study received a high, quality review with the appropriate subject matter expertise. We would like to express our thanks to all those who made this possible: the study teams, the research managers, the sponsor, the institutions, the REB and contracts units. Equitable access to research is a cornerstone of the CHEER project and delegation of a regulated clinical trial to another REB creates a smoother, more efficient pathway to trial initiation that reaches more of our littlest people in Canada. We welcome submissions for more industry sponsored and investigator initiated clinical trials.

The second blanket Board of Record agreement has been executed between two participating institutions. This is a bi-directional board of record agreement that allows either institution to serve as the REB of record or the site and is a 3-year term. This is a big step forward for creating efficiencies with research initiation for multi-site, multi-provincial child health research.

CHEER continues to accept paediatric health studies with sites in Ontario, Nova Scotia and Newfoundland. Currently half of the studies in the CHEER system have sites in at least 2 provinces. Additionally, we have created a guidance document for new users of the system to help them navigate the system and a multisite ethics review workflow. The guidance can be found on the CHEER website. If you would like to use the CHEER system for your study, please feel free to reach out to Megan Allore and Miranda Miller, cheer@queensu.ca.

As a reminder, Documented Institutional Ethics Requirements (DIERs) for IWK Health can be found on the CHEER website. This document details the provincial and institutional requirements needed to be included in an ethics application for an IWK site and specific language for consent forms.

CHEER PAEDIATRIC RESEARCH ETHICS REVIEW CONSULTATION SERVICE

The consultation service continues to receive interest from researchers across the country and there has been significant support for the coordination of streamlined informed consent documents across sites. The Central Ethics Review Manager is working with CHEER Navigators across the country to socialize the ethics review consultation service and CHEER consent template. Researchers have found it helpful to ask their questions to one key contact prior to submitting their multi-site ethics applications.

Research projects eligible for this service must be:

- Multicentre with study sites located in at least 2 provinces. The lead site may be in any province. A multicentre study conducted in two phases with a pilot phase at a single site or in one province is eligible.
- Prospective pediatric observational or interventional health research study
- Peer reviewed research, i.e., by a designated steering committee and/or granting body (i.e.: CIHR).

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If you have a study that is eligible and would like to use this service please contact the Central Ethics Review Manager at megan.allore@micyrn.ca or use the intake form available on both CHEER and MICYRN websites.

CHEER EDUCATION PROGRAM

The Consent and Assent module has been translated into French and is now live on the CHEER website. We are in the final stages of translating the module on Data into French and have started work on the translation Study Design. This is a huge achievement for the CHEER project, and much work has gone into making these modules a reality in both languages.

Programme de recherche CHEER : Consentement et assentiment des participants

These modules are intended to be interactive as well as educational and are open access.

All the modules can be found here on the CHEER website.

CHEER Education Module Topics:

- Participant Recruitment
- Patient and Public Engagement
- Participant Consent and Assent
- Study Design
- Data

FINAL REPORT

As the CHEER project enters into the final stages, we have started to focus on the fourth deliverable of the project, the final report, lessons learned and recommendations. CHEER has learned a significant amount during the time of the project. There have been successes, challenges and a tremendous amount of collaboration and relationship building across the country. It is important to CHEER that the learnings of the project are carried forward as momentum builds towards a single review, benefiting all health research in Canada.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

CHEER Principal Investigators, Co-Investigators and Collaborators

CHEER Committees

- CHEER Pan-Canadian Working Group
- The Operational Management Team
- Patient & Family Advisory Committee
- MICYRN Research Institute Directors

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