

# **GHANA HEALTH SERVICE ETHICS REVIEW COMMITTEE GUIDELINES ON TELEPHONE/SKYPE INTERVIEWS FOR RESEARCH WITH HUMAN PARTICIPANTS**

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## **Introduction**

The GHS-ERC has developed the following guidelines on what must be included in a protocol for a proposed study that intends to use telephone/skype as a research tool. In addition to these Guidelines, please ensure that the requirements for submitting protocols available on the GHS website are fully adhered to.

A. Telephone/Skype interviews tends to be an invasive research tool; hence the Principal Investigator must be able to prove to the Committee the following:

- i. Provide valid justification for the preferred survey method including why the information could not be obtained using other less invasive means such as self-administered questionnaires, etc.
- ii. If the questions are worded sensitively, explain how you intend to minimize the potential for psychological risk as well as the existence of any referral protocol for participants who may experience emotional distress as a result of the interview.

B. The protocol must be accompanied by a written participant information sheet (PIS) which informs participants that telephone contact will be made with a consent form which participants will sign/thumbprint. In addition to the general requirements for developing PIS, it should also address the following:

- i. Reasons for obtaining information through a telephone/skype interview.
- ii. How participants' names, addresses, telephone/Skype numbers were obtained.

- iii. The desired participant and justification for why the participant has been or is being chosen.
- iv. Details of the nature of questions to be asked.
- v. When the interview will take place and the duration.
- vi. The procedure through which a participant can decline to be interviewed, e.g. providing a refusal form which participant can sign/thumbprint and return to PI.

C. Submit the telephone/Skype interview guide with the application and note the following:

- i. Introduction should be brief, clearly identifying the caller, caller's institution and referring to the invitation to participation. In asking to speak with the intended participant, the actual nature of the call should not be disclosed to a third party. For instance, it is enough to say "*I would like to speak with... in relation to a letter that we sent to her earlier about maternal health*", instead of "*I would like to speak with... in relation to a letter that we sent to her earlier about her HIV status*"
- ii. It must also cater for potential participants who did not receive the information letter, example; people who have changed their addresses and retained their telephone numbers, lost email, etc. Please note that if it is very necessary to interview such participants, the interview cannot proceed until such time as provided with an information sheet, if they are willing to receive one.
- iii. The participant must be asked their preference, i.e., video or audio if the interview will be conducted via Skype.
- iv. If the interview exceeds 5 minutes, the interviewer must ask the participant at 5 minutes intervals if they are still willing to proceed with the interview.
- v. The participant must be informed about the next set of questions and whether they are willing to continue with the interview, where the questions address sensitive issues such as Gender Based Violence, sexual behaviour or where the subject matter changes during the interview.