

Ethics Committee [EC]

An Ethics Committee is an independent body made up of a range of individuals including medical or scientific professionals and non-medical or non-scientific members (e.g. patients or lay members). An Ethics Committee may operate within an institution, or it may be national, or supranational or private.

Ethics committees have a responsibility to ensure the protection of the rights, safety and wellbeing of research participants, as well as assuring the public of that protection. It operates, among other things, expressing an opinion on the clinical trial protocol, the suitability of the investigators involved in the trial, the adequacy of facilities, and on the methods and documents to be used to inform trial participants and obtain their informed consent. A trial should only begin when a favourable opinion by an Ethics Committee has been given.

Ethics Committees may also monitor studies once they have begun and once they are complete.