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# **Important Considerations in Conducting In-Home Research**

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## Benefits of In-Home Research

1. Accessing research participants who might have difficulty traveling to a study site
2. No cost to participants (travel, food, baby-sitting)
3. Reducing the likelihood of last-minute cancellations or no-shows
4. Familiarity and comfort of the research participants with their own home
5. Providing a multi-faceted picture of the research participant's life or living condition

## Challenges of In-Home Research

1. Longer research hours due to travel time
2. Scheduling complexities
3. Less predictability and control over research participants/environment
4. Lack of researchers training and expertise if done without faculty presence
5. Mandatory reporting requirements (child or elderly abuse, sexual abuse)
6. Reportable/unanticipated incidents
7. Researchers' safety



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# Strategies to Effectively Conduct In-Home Research

1. Reduce the Fear Factor
  - Send an email in advance with set of expectations
  - Work in pairs. Balance gender, if possible
2. Be a good guest
  - Introduce each one and be friendly
  - Be prepared
3. Be respectful of their time
  - Be on time and don't overstay
4. Respect boundaries
  - Ask permission and don't assume
  - Avoid getting too personal
5. Prioritize safety



# Advance Prep for In-Home Research

1. Gather background information. Call in advance, remind about COVID-19 safety protocols, and who else will be present during the research (including pets).
2. Schedule the visit when it is convenient for the participants.
3. Check out the location of the home to be visited.
4. Dress appropriately for the research setting.
5. Take personal protection or safety device.



# Tips for In-Home Research Safety

Consider the following as triggers for action:

1. The participants (or others in the house) are intoxicated with alcohol or street drugs to a degree that the research cannot be conducted appropriately.
2. Actual or perceived threats of physical violence directed against researchers or other person in the house.
3. Sexually inappropriate verbalization or behavior such that researchers feel threatened.
4. Other concerns, such as the production or presence of an object perceived to be weapon that may be used against them.



# Consider the following during IRB review:

1. There is a plan in place for training personnel conducting home visits. They should be appropriately qualified and, as applicable, credentialed or licensed.
2. There is a plan in place for monitoring the conduct of home visits, including communications between the PI (or designee) and the personnel during home visits (e.g. PI on stand-by, easy to reach)
3. Study records will include documentation of home visits, including procedures performed and name of persons conducting procedures.
4. The consent form describes the home visits and mandatory reporting.
5. Protocols should include stopping the study immediately if problems arise (such as privacy/confidentiality concerns, safety of participants/researchers).



# Takeaways

- It's okay for the IRB to question the cultural competence of the study team...
- It's okay for the IRB to talk about Trust, Transparency, and Impartiality...
- It's okay for the IRB to focus on the consent process and materials...
  - Therapeutic misestimation – failure to correctly identify the likelihood of risks and/or benefits
  - Complex writing and jargon
  - Clear research concepts, not just a list of activities
  - Don't mistake participant silence for comprehension

...especially if the submission does not provide sufficient information for decision-making.



# Takeaways

As an IRB, perhaps we should take some of this information and determine how we may want to consider researchers going to participant's home to conduct research.

Discussion?





# References

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**Thank you!**