

Ethics Review Board
Instituted by Médecins Sans Frontières

Dr Leslie Shanks
Médecins Sans Frontières
Plantage Middenlaan 14
1018 DD Amsterdam, Netherlands

20 August 2012

Re: Ethics approval of research protocol *TB&ME: Examining the views and experiences of MDR-TB patient bloggers and TB programme staff on their interaction with blogging*, submitted 17 July 2012

Dear Dr Shanks,

Many thanks for submitting the above-mentioned proposal for ethics review. It is a very well developed proposal that will usefully add to our knowledge of social media and health. Ethical aspects are well addressed.

We have two small remarks for your consideration:

- Survey monkey may not be the adequate tool to use as it is a US based product and the data ownership/access issues are problematic.
- The interview guide seems long for a qualitative study (28 questions for the bloggers + probes). We wonder if it could be shortened. For example, the questions asked in the section 'Patients involvement' [Q no 23 – 28] are important but don't seem to correspond to the study's objective. The team may thus want to review the interview guide one more time to eliminate any unnecessary questions that fall outside the scope of the study objectives. On the other hand, researcher should also be open to add any relevant questions that might emerge from initial interviews to be included in subsequent interviews.

We thus approve the research protocol for a period of 12 months from initiation of the study. The study must be initiated within the next 12 months. If this is not the case the approval of this protocol is no longer valid. It is your responsibility to ensure that all people associated with this particular research are duly informed about the changes introduced and what has actually been approved.

Any subsequent changes you might wish to make to the project must be notified to the Ethics Review Board for further consideration and approval. Anything that may occur during the research that may affect ethical acceptability of the project, including adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events, must be reported immediately to the Ethical Review Board. We would appreciate receiving the final research report.

We wish you much success with the research.

Yours sincerely,



Doris Schopper
Chairperson, Ethics Review Board

Members of the Ethics Review Board

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