

Guidelines for Flyers, Advertisements and other Recruitment Materials

When direct advertising is to be used, the IRB reviews the information contained in the advertisement and the mode of its communication, to determine:

- Is the procedure for recruiting subjects coercive?
- Does the ad state or imply a certainty of favorable outcome or other benefits beyond what is outlined in the consent document and the protocol?

The IRB reviews:

- Printed advertisements: advertisements in newspapers, flyers, posters, direct mailings, brochures, newsletters, Weather Channel crawl ads, etc.
- Scripts of radio/TV ads
- Taped advertisements: review the final audio/video tape. The IRB may review and approve the advertisement prior to taping to preclude re-taping because of inappropriate content. The review of a taped message prepared from IRB approved text may be accomplished through expedited procedures.

Advertisements should not promise “free treatment,” when the intent is only to say subjects will not be charged for taking part in the research. The IRB considers whether the promise of treatment without charge is coercive to financially constrained subjects. Advertisements may state that subjects will be paid, but should not emphasize the payment or the amount to be paid.

If an investigator decides to begin advertising for subjects after the study has received IRB approval, the advertising may be considered as an amendment to the ongoing study. When such advertisements are easily compared to the consent, the IRB may choose to review and approve the advertisement using expedited procedures.

When the comparison is not obvious or other complicating issues are involved, the advertisement is reviewed at a convened meeting.

Generally, advertisements to recruit subjects should be limited to the information the prospective subjects need to determine their eligibility and interest. When appropriately worded, the following items may be included in advertisements. It should be noted, however, that the IRB does not require inclusion of all of the listed items.

- The investigator should include the purpose of the experiments and/or briefly state what is expected of the subject.
- Should include the time commitment required of the subject.
- In summary form, the criteria that will be used to determine eligibility for the study
- A brief list of participation benefits, if any (e.g., a no-cost health examination)
- Should include the investigator’s University department affiliation.
- Should State the location of the research, or advise participants to call for this information (note that certain changes in location may require IRB review if the change could affect subject confidentiality or possibly increase risks to subjects)
- Should list a contact name and phone number.
- Should not include the name of commercial sponsors or products.
- Should state a specific amount of money or simply state “Compensation Available.” Compensation should not be excessive to the nature of the project or be used as an inducement to participation.

The advertisement or recruitment letter must accompany the submission packet for new project applications.

Any revision to an approved promotion must be reviewed and approved by the IRB.