A RELATIONSHIP-BASED FRAMEWORK FOR CLINICAL RESEARCH:

Ethical Considerations Beyond Informed Consent

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Clinical Research Education Series

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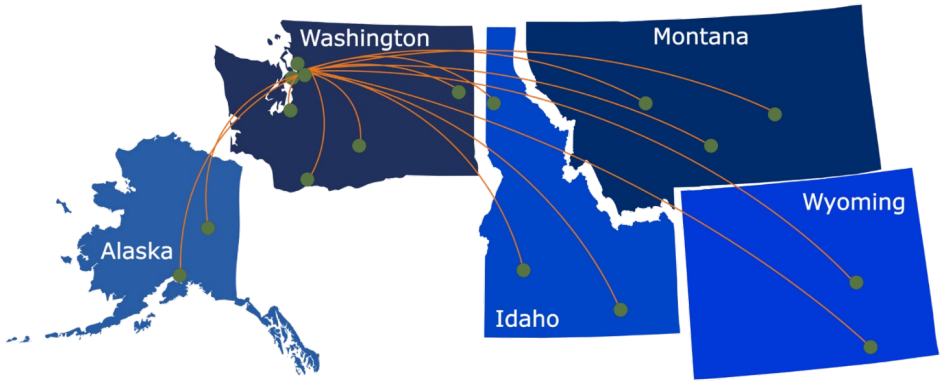

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Feedback

At the end of the seminar, a link to the feedback survey will be sent to the email address you used to register.

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Learning Objectives

In this session you will learn about eight ethical benchmarks for clinical research and practice applying them to real-life case examples, with a focus on the role of researcher-participant interactions.

By the end of this session you will be able to:

- Describe eight benchmarks for ethical clinical research.
- Discuss how empirical data illustrate challenges with informed consent.
- Describe the role of researcher-participant interactions in the ethical conduct of research.

Outline

- Research ethics: where have we been and where are we going
- Informed consent and its challenges
- Benchmarks for ethical clinical research
- A deep-dive on respect and the importance of contextualizing research
- A framework for building trusting research relationships

Origins of research ethics guidelines

Guidelines for ethical research are largely responsive to egregious human rights violations

- Nuremberg Trials → Nuremberg Code (1947)
- US Public Health Service syphilis study at Tuskegee → Belmont Report (1979)

Nuremberg Code, 1st principle

"The voluntary consent of the human subject is absolutely essential."

The Belmont Report

"Respect for persons incorporates at least two ethical convictions: first, that **individuals should be treated as autonomous agents**, and second, that persons with diminished autonomy are entitled to protection."

Research ethics today

- Not just about preventing egregious violations
- Offers guidance and tools to:
  - identify potential pitfalls
  - prevent unjustified or unnecessary harm
  - improve equitable research practices
- Fleshes out responsibilities above the regulatory floor

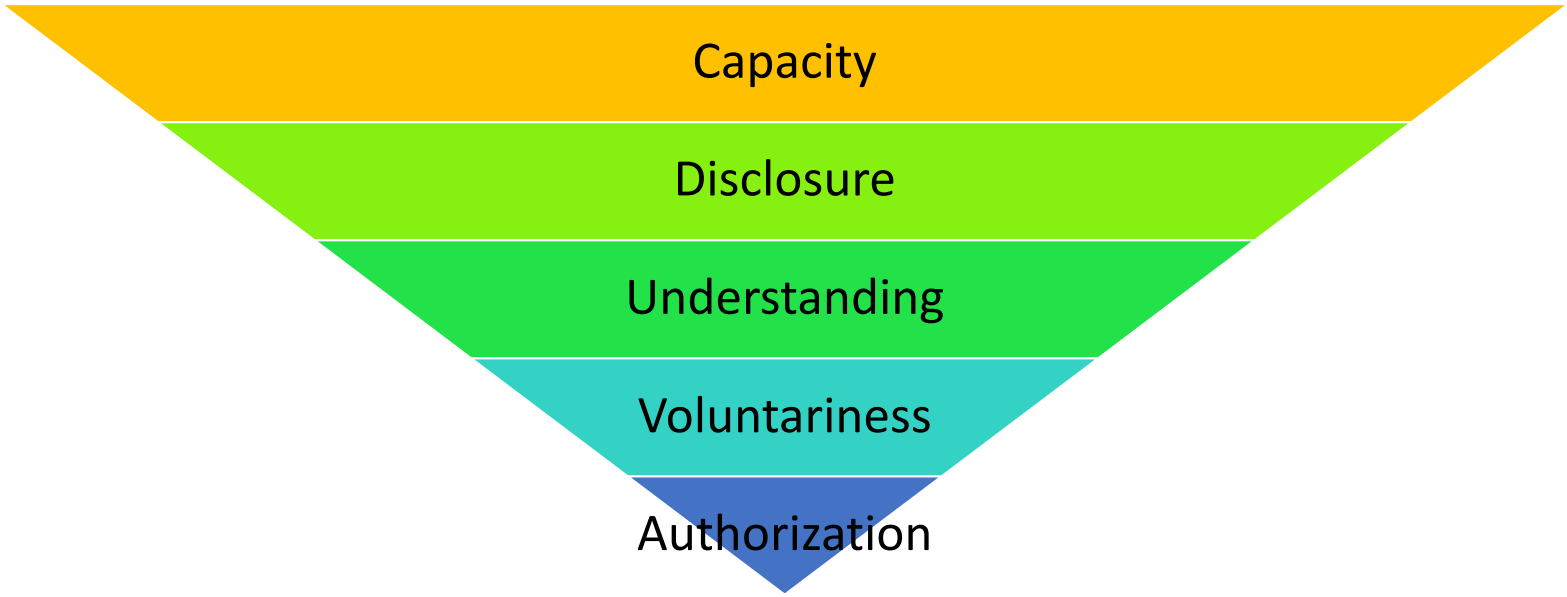
The future of research ethics

- New challenges – e.g., big data, open science
- Ethical issues arise at all stages of a study
  - Study design
  - Recruitment/consent
  - Data collection
  - Analysis
  - Dissemination
- Team science requires team ethics
  - All team members should feel empowered to identify and address ethical issues

Questions to think about

- Have you ever faced an ethical issue in your research?
  - If so – did you bring it up? To whom? What made it easier or harder to have those conversations?
  - If not – are there ethical issues you anticipate coming up for you? Are there topics or issues you are thinking about how to incorporate?
- How do you see your role in identifying and resolving ethical issues?
  - How has your role evolved over time?

Five elements of informed consent



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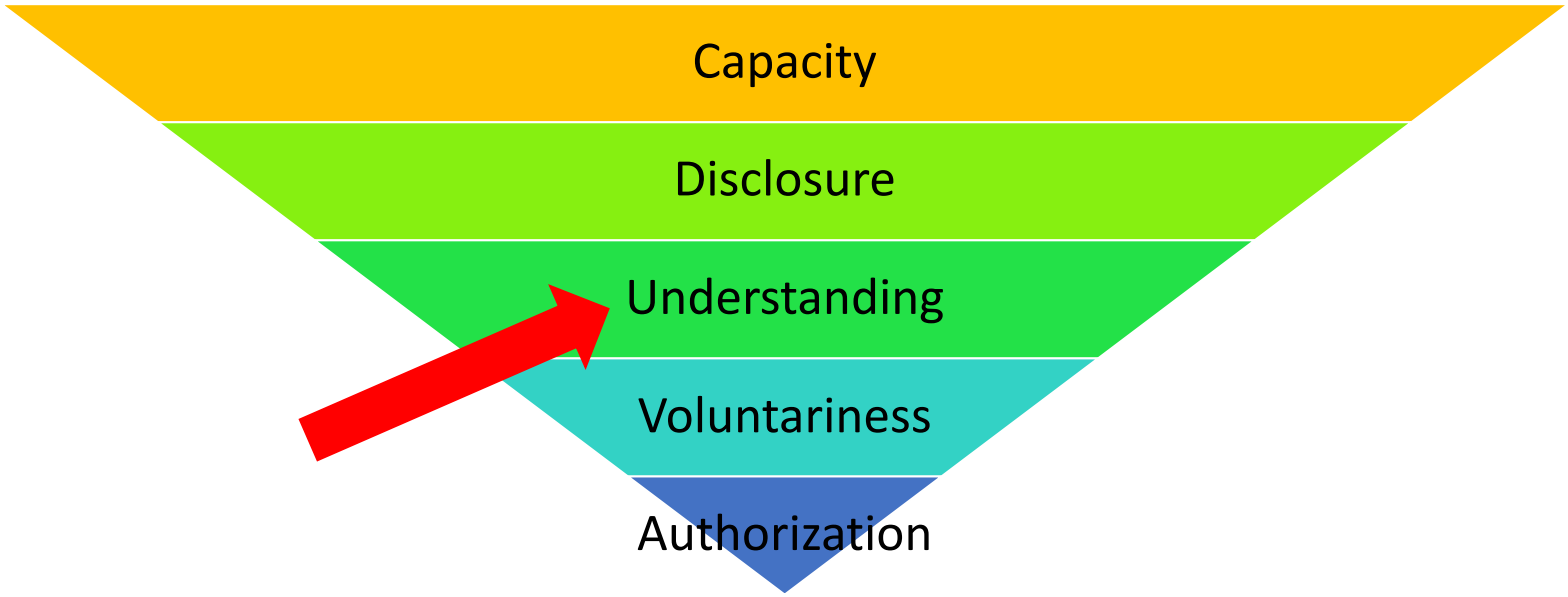

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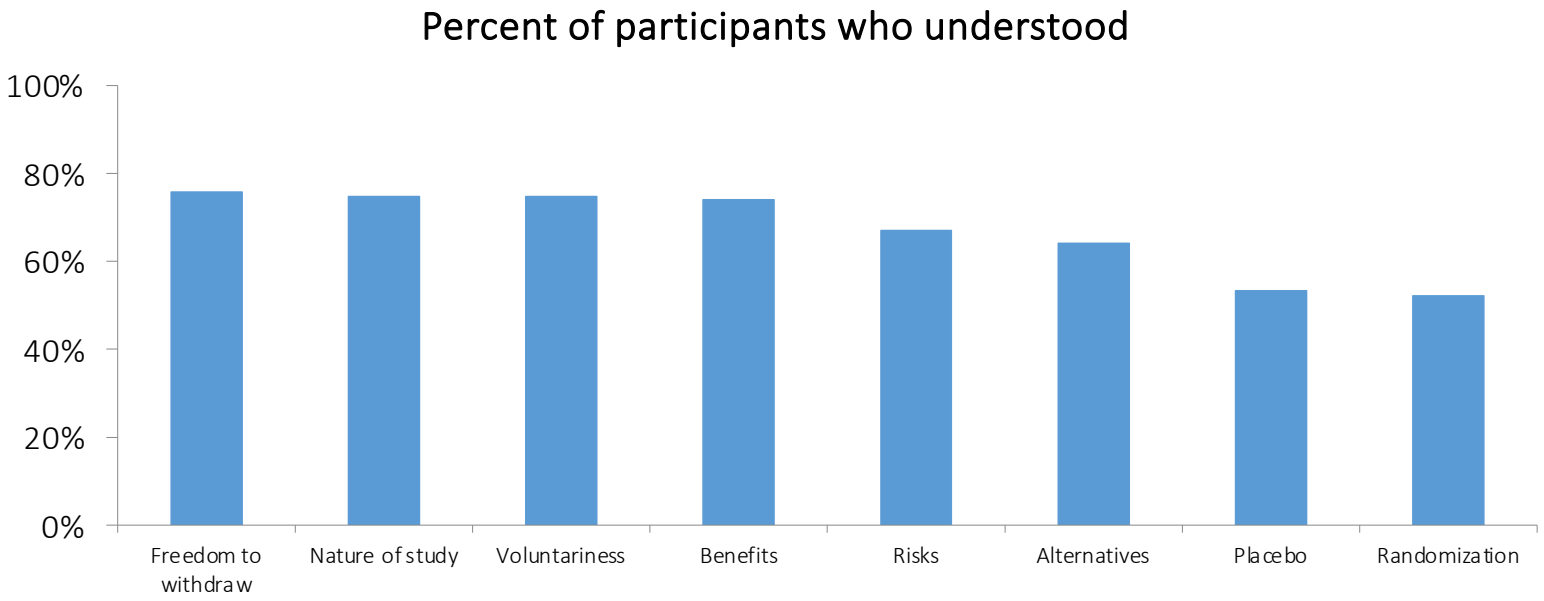
Understanding of consent elements



Nguyen TT et al. *Bull WHO* 2015.

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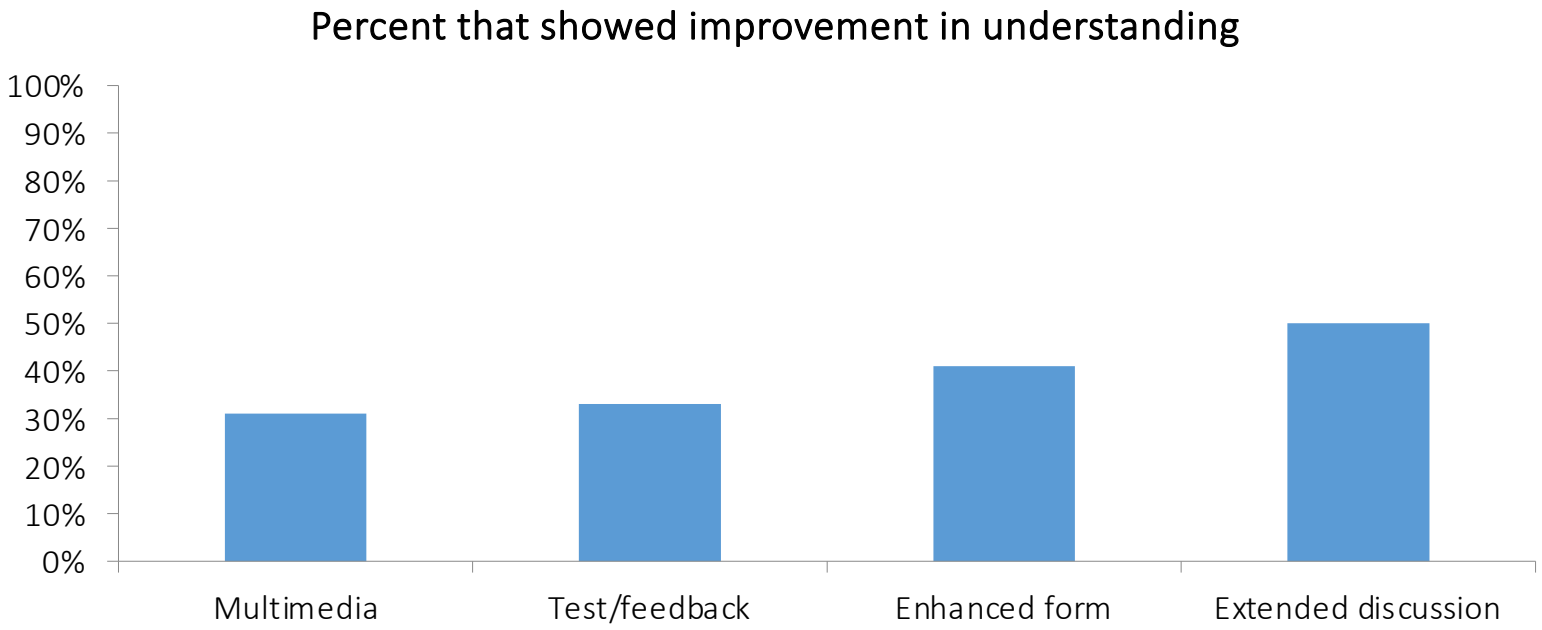
Interventions to improve understanding



Nishimura et al. *BMC Med Ethics* 2013.

Informed consent is hard

- Understanding is limited and hard to improve
- Discussions with study team can help
  - Do we give consenters the tools to have these discussions?
- Maybe we need to focus *earlier* in the process
  - Decisions may start with initial outreach and study team conversations (Kraft et al. *JAMA Network Open* 2020)

Systematic, comprehensive look at overall study design can contextualize the role of informed consent and support relationship-building

Eight benchmarks for ethical clinical research

Emanuel et al. *JAMA* 2000; *JID* 2004.

- Collaborative partnership
- Social value
- Scientific validity
- Fair participant selection
- Favorable risk/benefit ratio
- Independent review
- Informed consent
- Respect for participants and communities

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Collaborative partnership

Does the research appropriately partner with the community (in research design, conduct, oversight, implementation, etc.)?

Promotes justice and avoids exploitation

Improves research quality:

- Transparency and buy-in
- Understanding community needs

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Social value

Will the research lead to improvements in health or generalizable knowledge?

Limited social value includes:

- Unimportant questions
- Non-generalizable research
- Non-disseminated findings

Scientific validity

Is there a reasonable possibility the research will produce valid scientific results (e.g., enrollment, outcomes, power)?

Necessary to justify:

- Resources used
- Risks and burdens undertaken by participants

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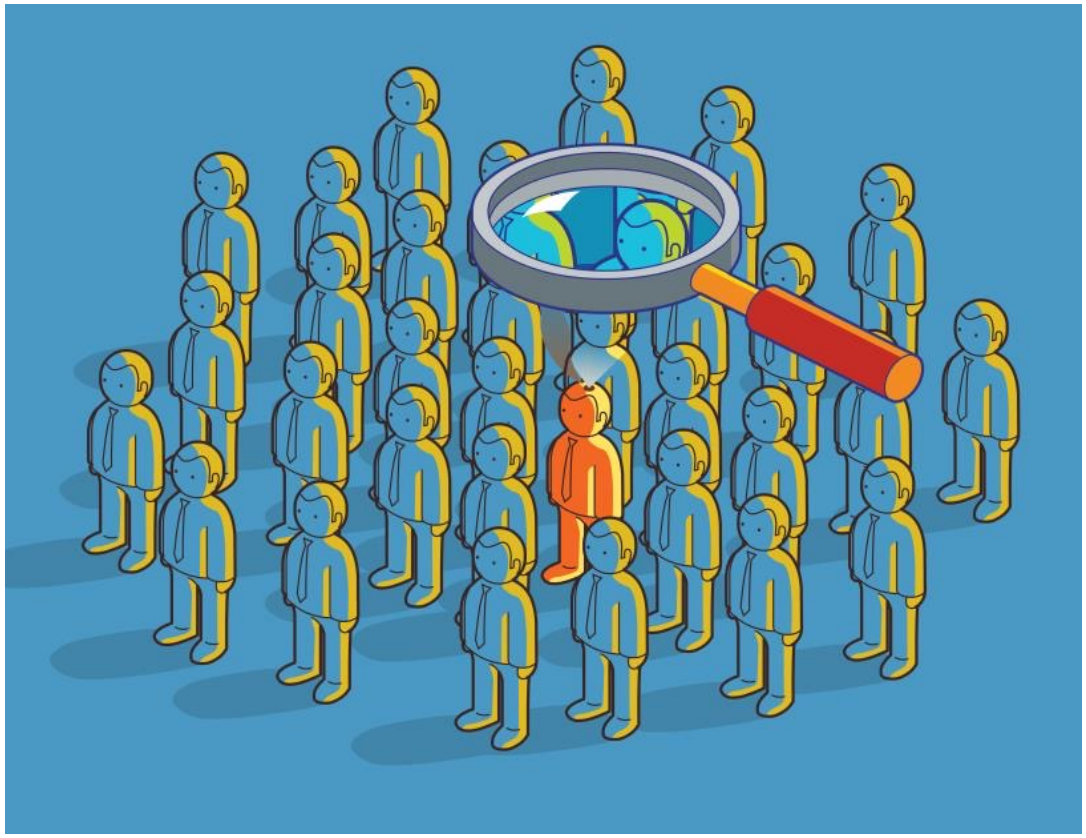
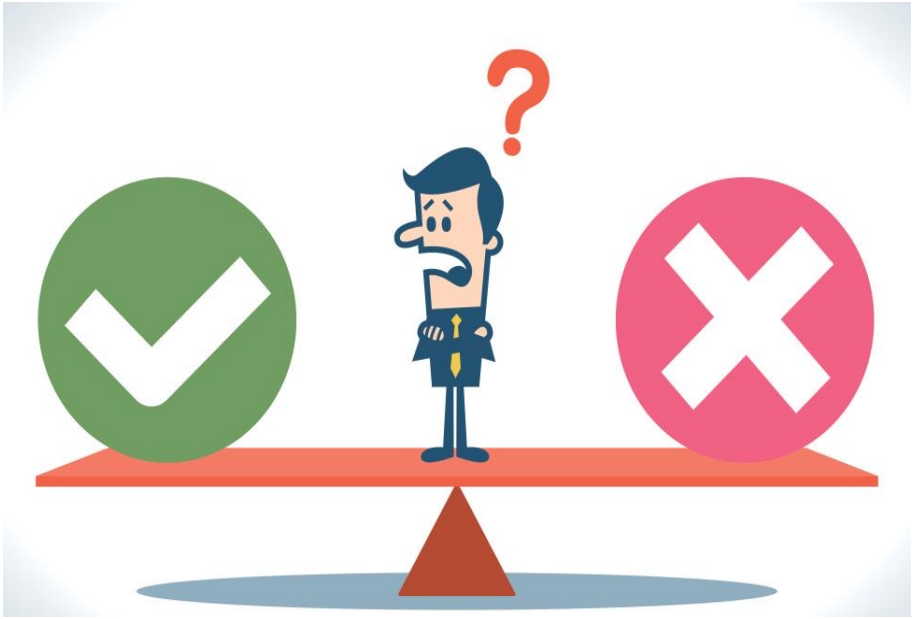


Fair participant selection

Are the study's scientific objectives, not vulnerability or privilege, guiding inclusion criteria and targeted populations?

Consider distribution of burdens and benefits of research:

- Burden → need protection
- Benefit → need access



Favorable risk-benefit ratio

Does the research minimize risks and maximize benefits?

If benefits > risks to individual, proceed

If risks > benefits to individual, societal benefit must justify net risk

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Independent review

Has the study been reviewed by an independent body?

Minimizes impact of potential conflicts of interest

Assures society that research is ethically appropriate

Informed consent

Has the participant made an informed decision about whether to take part?

Serves multiple functions: welfare, control, values concordance, trust, transparency

Some research can be ethical without all elements of consent (e.g., de-identified biospecimens, waiver of documentation)

Respect for participants and communities

Is the research team treating participants with respect throughout the study?

Obligations may include:

- Confidentiality
- Right to withdraw
- Compensation for injury
- Sharing results

What does respect mean to participants?

Personal study team interactions
Building relationships

Study communication processes
Maintaining relationships

Inclusion and accessibility
Addressing unjust structures

Consent and authorization
Promoting autonomy

Kraft et al. J Med Ethics 2021

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Respecting the whole person

"**Respect the process of each person,** because we are all quite different and we don't all take things the same way."

"For me, it comes down to how they treat me. They don't treat me like a patient. They don't treat me like a number. **They treat me like a person.**"

Kraft et al. J Med Ethics 2021

Contextualizing the research interaction

Health and health care

Finances

Society

Culture

Relationships

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The importance of holding space

"I believe that holding space for the whole individual experience of disease and illness, as well the potential of our own illnesses (and impacts on our families), is the most important part of feeling respected."

– Survey respondent, Kraft et al. BMC Med Ethics 2023

Research must be contextualized

Research that doesn’t reflect patients' lived experiences risk widening existing gaps and exacerbating the impact of structural disparities

- E.g., social and environmental exposures, experience of healthcare delivery

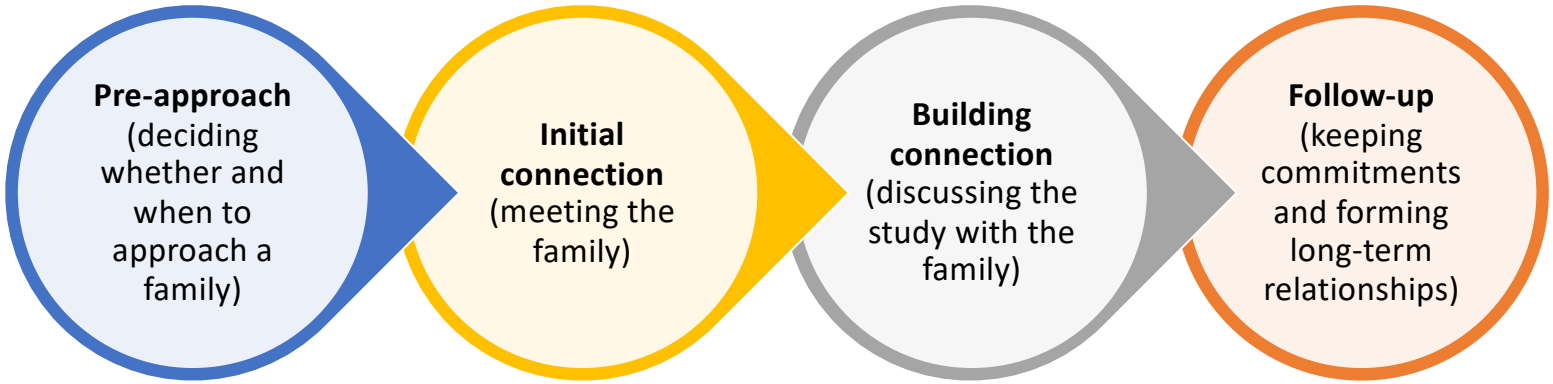
Non-inclusive research results in

- Lower quality care
- Underutilization
- Worse outcomes
- Less trust

Meeting people where they are

Those tasked with recruiting and consenting need to be prepared to **approach potential participants in a contextualized way** to respect the lived realities of potential participants and ensure participants represent a diversity of experiences

4-stage relationship-building process



Kraft et al. J Clin Transl Sci 2022

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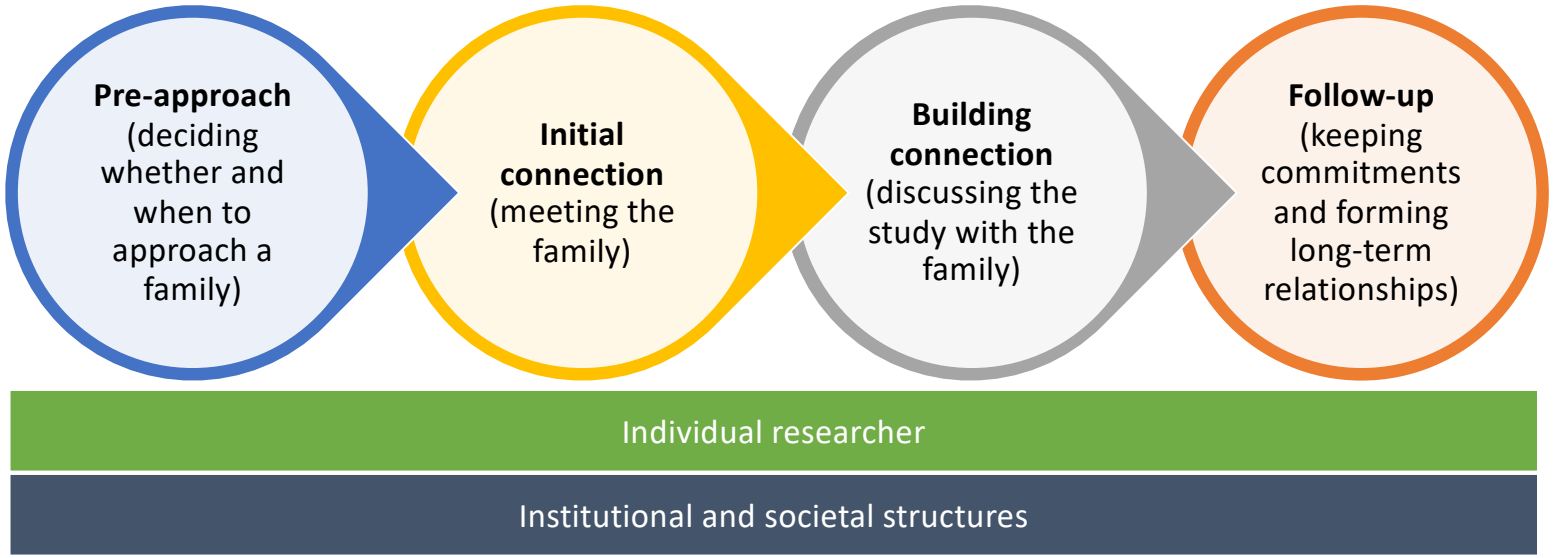
4-stage relationship-building process



Kraft et al. J Clin Transl Sci 2022

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Consent as a sign of trustworthiness

"I liked that there was a lot of consent. I mean, it's reams and reams of information, but at the same time, it's good to know the consents and that kind of stuff. I know that the medical community doesn't always have it as straight as that."

– Interview participant, Kraft et al. J Med Ethics 2021

Holding space

"Our patients and families have different needs at different times. …. I'm a part of their whole experience, but I am not the most important part. The most important part is that they are navigating in the world with their child."

– Interview participant, Kraft et al. J Clin Transl Sci 2022

Takeaways

- “Traditional” informed consent and IRB review are important, but not sufficient – and imperfectly realized
- Eight benchmarks can help systematically identify issues that need attention
  - Balancing is often necessary
- Paying attention to the context in which research occurs and holding space for each individual participant’s experiences is essential

Thank You

Open for Questions

Feedback Survey

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Please spend a few moments completing that survey before you move to the next part of your day.

Tip: If on a mobile device, shift view to landscape view (sideways) for better user experience.