

CHEO

Research Ethics Board

Annual Report 2025



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WHAT WE DO

What is the mandate of the CHEO REB?

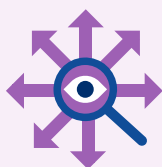
The CHEO REB provides ethical review and ongoing oversight of research involving human participants conducted under the auspices of CHEO. The REB determines whether proposed research is ethically acceptable and conducted in a manner that safeguards the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants. To accomplish this, the REB reviews and approves research proposals and may require modifications to ensure compliance with the highest scientific and ethical standards. The REB also oversees the conduct of approved research, including the review of safety events, determining remediation for protocol deviations and other instances of non-compliance, and may require corrective actions or suspend or terminate research when necessary. The REB functions independently of the Hospital and Research Institute with respect to all deliberations and decisions.

Why it matters?

A fundamental premise of standards governing the ethical conduct of research is that research can benefit human society. Researchers have the primary responsibility to ensure that research involving humans meets high scientific and ethical standards that respect and protect the rights, dignity, and welfare of participants. Research, by definition, is a process of discovery. It necessarily entails or increases risk to participants and others. Risks can be trivial or profound, physical or psychological, individual or communal. There are many tragic examples where research participants and communities have been harmed by research. To minimize the risks of such harms, ethical principles and guidelines play an important role in advancing the pursuit of knowledge in a responsible and respectful manner.

Having robust processes and appropriate safeguards to ensure compliance with the necessary ethical and regulatory requirements for human research is a shared institutional responsibility.

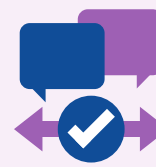
What is the scope of activities of the CHEO REB?



Oversight and compliance



Risk management and mitigation



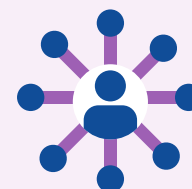
Conflict resolution



Advisory



Capacity building and education



Collaboration with research ethics community

A snapshot of the review process

2 types of review:



Full Board Reviews

Full Board reviews involve greater than minimal risk to the participant. This includes studies involving regulated drugs or clinical research with vulnerable populations.

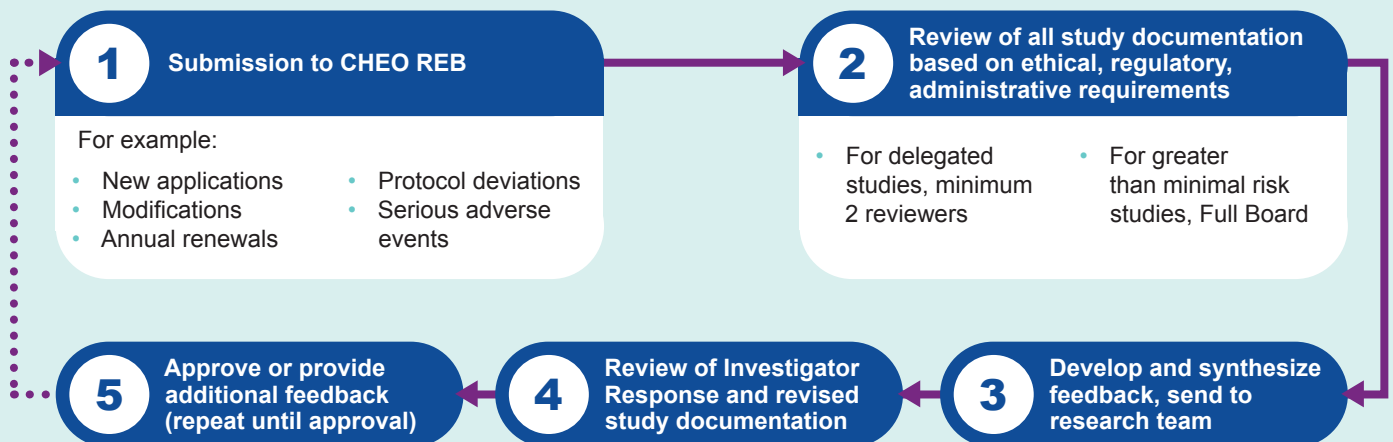


Delegated Reviews

Delegated reviews involve minimal risk to the participant. This includes prospective and retrospective studies with children, families and/or staff.

Submissions, especially delegated submissions, significantly vary in complexity and quality. They may be investigator-led, unfunded, and not peer-reviewed for their scientific viability.

The review process:



Throughout the review process:



Administrative review of all submissions for completeness and accuracy of study documentation



Discussions/meetings with PIs and research teams



Consultation with Quality Assurance, Privacy, other REBs, research ethics colleagues

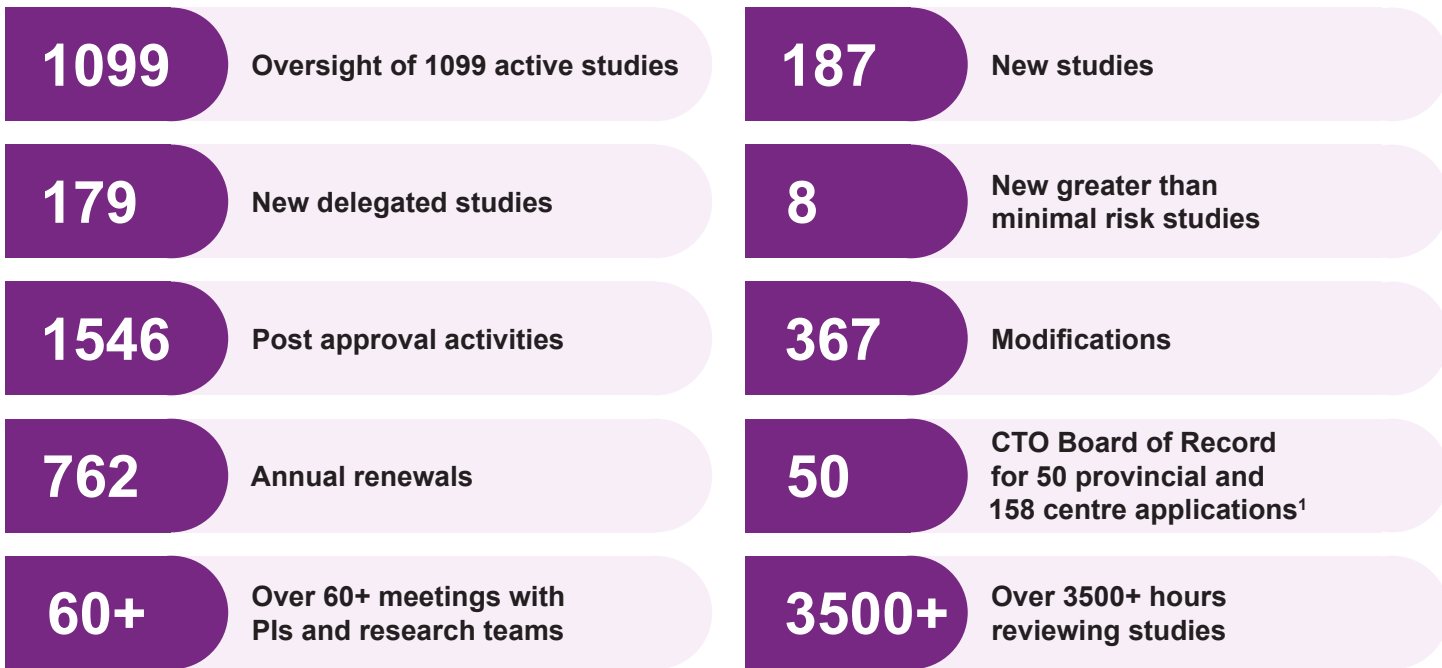


Risk management and mitigation to preserve the scientific and ethical integrity of studies and the research enterprise at CHEO

WHAT WE'VE DONE

2025 Highlights

Oversight and Compliance



¹ Clinical Trials Ontario's (CTO) and Canadian Collaboration for Child Health: Efficiency and Excellence in the Ethics Review of Research (CHEER) streamlined system enables a single qualified REB to provide ethics review and ongoing oversight for multiple research sites participating in the same study. The CHEO REB became a CTO qualified Board of Record in 2017 and CHEER qualified Board in 2021.

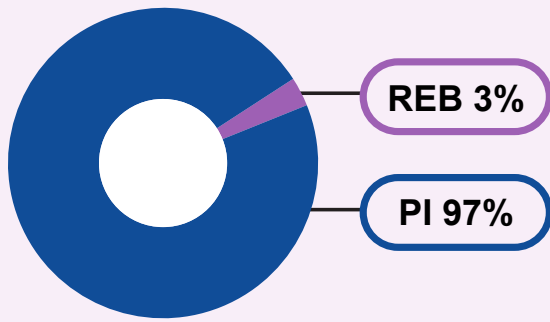
Governance

- Strengthened research oversight by implementing a centralized intake process to consistently determine when projects require REB review at CHEO.
- Advanced CHEO REB's leadership in streamlining ethics review of pediatric research by acting as the REB of Record for four new studies through [CHEER](#).
- Helped shape the emerging [CanReview](#) platform by contributing to national working groups, supporting early adoption of the program by CHEO REB and enhancing our role in streamlining ethics review across Canada.
- Expanded the Board's capacity by onboarding three new members in key areas (Community, Scientific, Legal) to support effective deliberation and oversight of research.

Operations

- Raised institutional awareness of and adherence to research ethics standards through expanded in-service education and targeted communications to key stakeholder groups.
- Streamlined REB member onboarding through the introduction of a centralized database and updated onboarding package, improving efficiency and preparedness of new members.
- Enhanced guidance for researchers by collaborating across departments to modernize stakeholder-facing resources, reducing uncertainty, and improving the quality of submissions.
- Supported compliance with evolving standards by updating CHEO-specific requirements for research reviewed through the CTO and OCREB review pathways, ensuring alignment with national and institutional expectations.

FIGURE 1: Review and Approval Timeline Greater than Minimal Risk



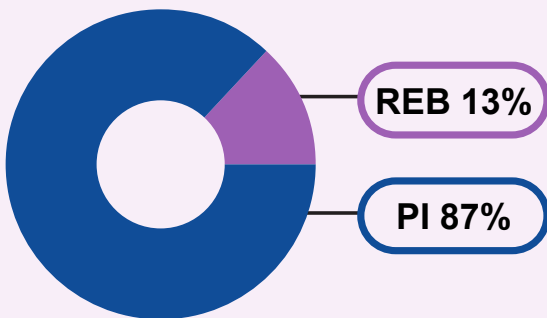
Submission to First Feedback:

1 MEDIAN DAYS

Submission to Final Approval:

101 MEDIAN DAYS

FIGURE 2: Review and Approval Timeline Prospective Minimal Risk



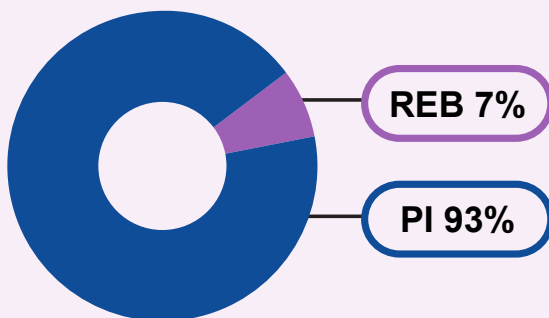
Submission to First Feedback:

2 MEDIAN DAYS

Submission to Final Approval:

21 MEDIAN DAYS

FIGURE 3: Review and Approval Timeline Retrospective Minimal Risk



Submission to First Feedback:

1 MEDIAN DAYS

Submission to Final Approval:

10 MEDIAN DAYS

FIGURE 4: New study submissions (Initial Applications)

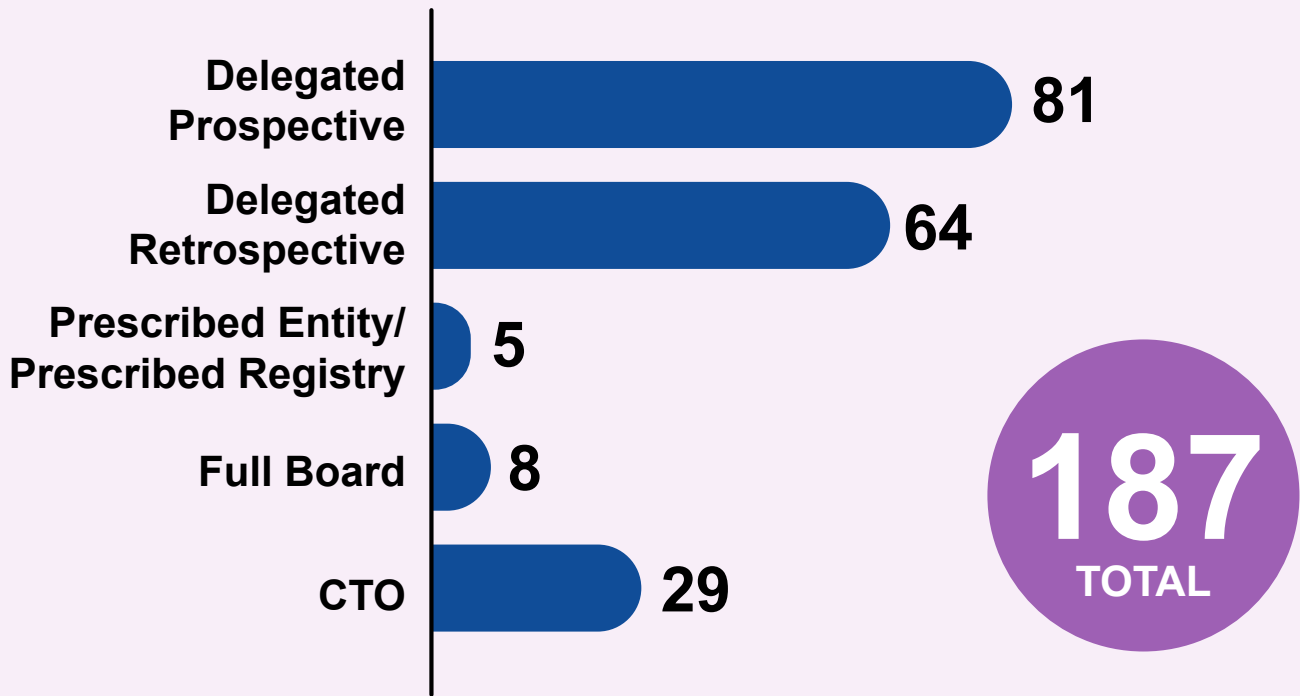
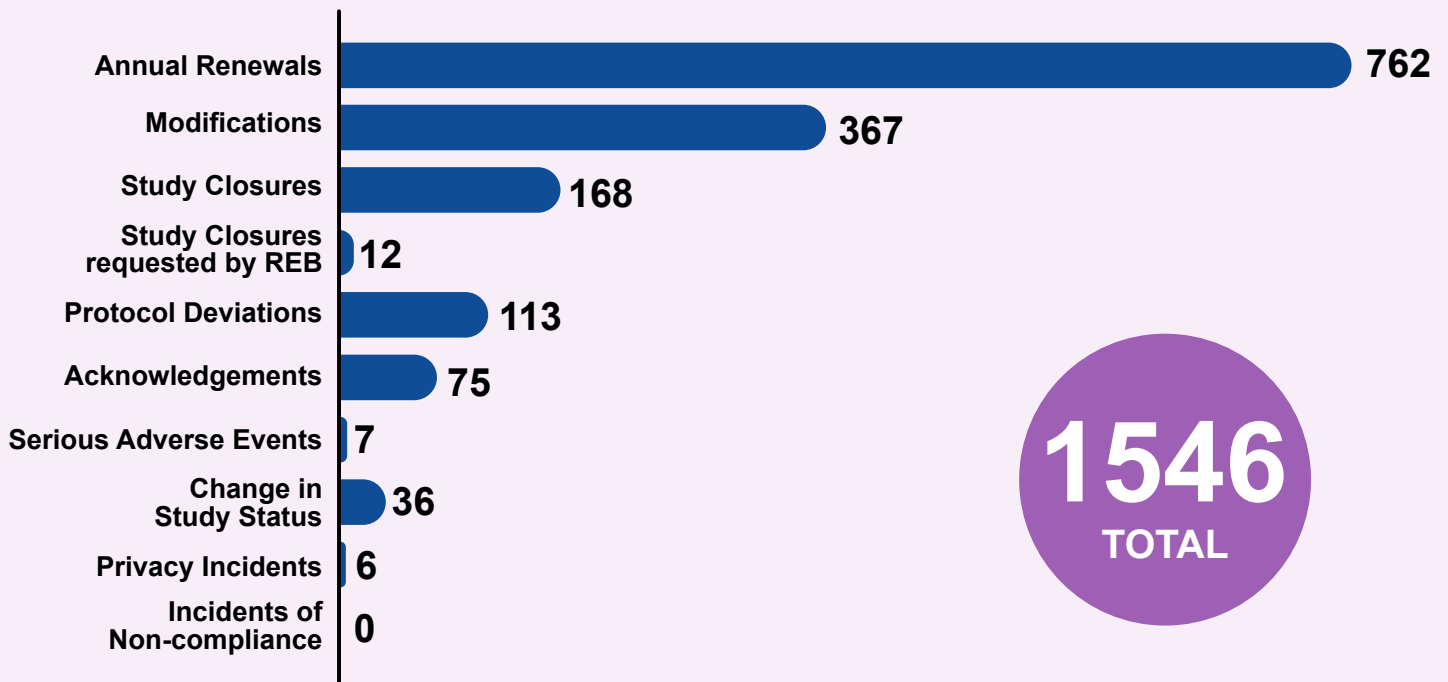


FIGURE 5: Post-approval activities



WHERE WE'RE GOING

2026 Strategic & Governance Goals

1

Monitor shifts in the ethical and regulatory landscape—including federal, provincial, and institutional guidance—and adapt CHEO REB policies and workflows in real time.

2

Strengthen reviewer expertise through ongoing education on emerging research ethics topics, regulatory trends, and technological innovations.

3

Reduce barriers to timely ethics review by developing new processes tailored to minimal risk projects, supporting proportional, efficient oversight.

4

Enhance review transparency and consistency by continuing to refine project determination workflows, guidance materials, and REB communication pathways across the research ecosystem.

5

Position CHEO as an early adopter of [CanReview](#), the new national ethics pathway to advance streamlined multi-jurisdictional review.

CHEO REB IN ACTION

Our Services at Work



REB Consultation

Discuss protocol development, key ethical issues in research design, recruitment and consent considerations, and much more.



Virtual In-service

Topical mini-presentation and discussion to provide knowledge sharing and education delivered when it is needed.



Tools & Templates

Laying the groundwork to get any research project development started.



Guidance Documents

Providing clarity in critical areas relating to application of research ethics standards in CHEO Research.



Project Determinations

Supporting teams in determining whether their projects require REB review and approval.



Streamlined Ethics Review

With multiple pathways available, multi-site projects may benefit from streamlined REB review which decreases administrative burdens.

OUR SERVICES AT WORK

What we've heard

The REB consultation provided a simplified process for becoming a second site for a study. We value our collaborative working relationship with the CHEO REB. Through a true partnership, we are able to meet ethical requirements while moving our research forward in a timely manner. The CHEO REB's ethical guidance is invaluable and we appreciate their knowledge and expertise. Their understanding of the pragmatic nature of clinical research and complex ethical issues has facilitated the success of our research program.

The REB's dedication to performing and providing thoughtful consideration of complex study reviews is enhanced by their continuing endeavour to improve the process. In addition, their insight in challenging intellectual discussions is most appreciated. Suggestions into approaches for our research are helpful and convey a desire to welcome research at CHEO.

All our questions were answered and extra tips and notes were given. The REB office really helped us to understand the points we need to address in our protocol. They helped us understand the harmonization process with TOH and helped us understand considerations for data sharing through an REB lens. A great experience!

Our questions were answered very thoroughly and excellent suggestions from similar studies to ours were provided. The REB office was quick to meet and very helpful. I am glad that CHEO REB offers this kind of support.

I met with the REB team today, and it's always an awesome experience. They come to consultations after having done recent reviews of relevant sections of TCPS2/GCP/other legislation to help answer your question, and their answer is always so thorough. It's nice to know that so much thought and effort was put into the meeting with the REB! All my questions were answered in full, and I left the consultation feeling supported and motivated.



WHO WE ARE

Research Ethics Board



Cécile Bensimon MA, PhD

Cécile is Chair of the REB. She is the National Ethicist at Correctional Service Canada. She is a member of the CIHR Committee on Ethics and Governor for Canada and Vice-President, North America for the World Association for Medical Law.



Sandra Djuric RN, MScN

Sandy completed her nursing studies at the University of Ottawa where she graduated with a Master of Science in Nursing. In her career at CHEO she worked in Pediatric Medicine, Oncology and Discharge Planning. She is a long-standing Faculty member at the University of Ottawa where she teaches courses in Community Health and Professionalism and Ethics.



Emilie Hageltorn B.Sc

Emilie is a Community Member of the REB. She holds a BSc in Medicinal Chemistry and is currently pursuing a Master of Biotechnology at Carleton University. As part of CHEO's Family Leader Program, she provides feedback on research projects and has co-chaired the Patient and Family Advisory Committee. As a former CHEO patient, Emilie brings lived experience and a strong commitment to empowering the patient voice and promoting patient-centered health research.



Sabrina Heyde JD

Sabrina holds a law degree from Queen's University and works as a Senior Investigator with the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada. She has served as a community and legal member of the REB since 2017. Sabrina is currently completing a Master of Arts in Counselling Psychology (MACP), further expanding her expertise in clinical ethics, mental health, and patient-centred research.



Sophia Hrycko PhD, MD, FRCP(C)

Sophia is a child and adolescent psychiatrist and assistant professor at the University of Ottawa since 1998. She focuses on providing mental health services to physically ill children and adolescents.



Marie-Ange Janvier PhD

Marie-Ange is a certified clinical engineer (CCE) at CHEO. She has a PhD in biomedical engineering from the University of Montreal/Polytechnique Montréal. She also holds a degree in electrical engineering from the University of Ottawa. She is a part-time professor at the University of Ottawa in the biomedical engineering program, an Adjunct Research Professor at Carleton University in the Department of Systems and Computer Engineering, and an Adjunct Professor at the University of Ottawa in the Department of Mechanical Engineering.



Robert Klassen MD, FRCP(C)

Robert is a Pediatric Hematologist/Oncologist at CHEO, Professor at the Department of Pediatrics, University of Ottawa and Clinical Investigator at the CHEO Research Institute. His clinical focus is on the care of patients with non-malignant hematologic disorders.



Anthony McIntyre, BCom, LLB

Anthony is a senior legal executive with extensive experience in regulatory, administrative, and privacy law with the federal government. As Senior General Counsel at the Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC), Anthony manages a team of legal professionals responsible for advising the CRTC on the implementation of complex legislative and policy initiatives impacting Canada's communications industry.



Sasha Mazzarello RN, MSc, BScN, BSc

Sasha holds a BScN in Nursing from the University of Toronto, an MSc in Epidemiology and a BSc in Biomedical Science from the University of Ottawa. She is an RN in the Emergency Department at CHEO and is a part-time professor with the University of Ottawa, Algonquin College and Cégep-Heritage College where she teaches nursing and paramedic students. Sasha has previously worked closely with the OHSN REB as a Clinical Research Coordinator at The Ottawa Hospital Cancer Centre.



Siddika Mithani PhD

Siddika holds a BSc in Pharmacy and a PhD in psychopharmacology. She is the past President of the Public Health Agency of Canada as well as the Canadian Food Inspection Agency. She has extensive background and experience in the regulatory and scientific review, evaluation, and approval of clinical trials in Canada.



Scott Murray Hon BA

Scott is the President, DataAngel Policy Research Inc., a Canadian policy research company serving a broad range of clients. Prior, he was the Director, Education Outcomes at the Unesco Institute for Statistics (UIS). Scott holds an Honours BA from the University of Western Ontario.



Alex Petiquan MD

Alex is Anishinaabe from Wabauskang First Nation and graduated from the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. His work spans Indigenous public health, policy, governance, epidemiology, and data sharing agreements, both as a Senior Analyst in the Federal sector and as a member of the Health Expert Advisory Panel for Grand Council Treaty #3.



Lori Pope LLB

Lori is a community member of the REB. She is the mother of two children, both of whom were treated for life-threatening medical conditions at CHEO. She is also a lawyer who has worked in private practice, legal aid clinics, and for a federal regulatory tribunal. She has a particular interest in human rights, privacy, and community legal education.



Nisha Varughese PharmD, BCPPS, MHA

Nisha is a board-certified pediatric pharmacist and scientific member of the REB, dedicated to advancing patient-centered care through clinical research. Over 15 years with the CHEO inpatient pharmacy team, including 10 years in pediatric critical care, Nisha led research and innovation initiatives and now serves as Associate Director with Canadian Blood Services' Plasma Protein and Related Products formulary team.



Vincent So MD

Vincent is a resident physician at the University of Ottawa. He was previously a pediatrics resident at CHEO prior to transferring into Family Medicine. His academic interests include health services research, pain management, and health equity. He is actively involved in leadership and advocacy, and is currently serving on the Advocacy, Communications, and Engagement (ACE) Panel of the Ontario Medical Association.



Régis Vaillancourt OMM, CD, PharmD, FCSHP

Régis is a pharmacist with 40 years of experience he is currently the Vice President of pharmacy affairs at BCE pharma, a software company focusing on supporting compounding pharmacies in meeting practice standards. Throughout his career, Régis has worked with different pharmacy organizations. He has published more than 100 peer-reviewed articles on pharmacy practice with a focus on medication safety and health literacy.

WHO WE ARE

Research Ethics Office



Sarah Tagliapietra
HBSc, BEd

Sarah is the Manager of the REB. She has worked with multiple academic and community based REBs in Ontario for over a decade and also has experience in global clinical trial management.



Natalie Anderson

Natalie is a Research Ethics Officer of the REB and brings a wealth of experience as a longstanding member of the Research Ethics Office.



Yulia Rosenstein Levin PhD

Yulia is a Research Ethics Officer of the REB. She has expertise in academic administration and a background in conducting human participant research in the areas of Cognitive Psychology and Behavioral Sciences.



Reagan Wallace HBA

Reagan is a Research Ethics Administrator with the REB. She holds an Honours Bachelor's degree in Anthropology with a focus on Medical Anthropology from Carleton University and is currently pursuing a Master's in Bioethics at Ohio State University. Inspired by CHEO's support for her sister and family, she is dedicated to giving back to the community that once supported her own.