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Identifying vulnerability

South East Queensland Combined Human Research
Ethics Training Day
Bond University
Varsity Lakes Campus
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Graduate Medicine



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Identifying vulnerability – a case study and discussion

In human research, vulnerability is a useful term to

- identify ethically relevant features that
- are common to a variety of people and circumstances and
- that researchers and reviewers can address, respectively, in planning and reviewing the participation of such people and the conduct of human research in such circumstances.



Identifying vulnerability – a case study and discussion

- The scope of the term offers an advantage over other terms used to describe some of these circumstances, eg dependency, coercion, conflict of interests
- A disadvantage of that same scope is to suggest that all vulnerabilities are the same
- Identifying the causes of each instance of vulnerability is important so that the vulnerability can be addressed



Identifying vulnerability – a case study and discussion

This discussion session is designed to provide an opportunity to:

- recognise circumstances of vulnerability
- identify why different potential participants are vulnerable, e.g.
 - who they are,
 - their existing relationships or
 - other circumstances that led to their involvement in the planned research.
- So that the vulnerability can be addressed and their participation ethically justified



Identifying vulnerability – a case study and discussion

In table groups:

- read the Healthy Regions Study proposal (inside back page of program)
- consider and develop answers to the questions
- after about 20-25 minutes, be prepared to offer feedback on
 - the questions about vulnerability of potential participants
 - bearing in mind the alternative researcher options



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