

Constitution of the IEC:

IECs should be multidisciplinary and multi-sectorial in composition. Independence and competence are the two hallmarks of an IEC. The number of persons in an ethical committee should be kept fairly small (7-9 members). It is generally accepted that a minimum of five persons is required to compose a quorum. There is no specific recommendation for a widely acceptable maximum number of persons but it should be kept in mind that too large a Committee will make it difficult in reaching consensus opinions. 12-15 is the maximum recommended number. The Chairperson of the Committee should preferably be from outside the Institution and not head of the same Institution to maintain the independence of the Committee. The Member Secretary who generally belongs to the same Institution should conduct the business of the Committee. Other members should be a mix of medical / non - medical scientific and non-scientific persons including lay public to reflect the differed viewpoints.

The composition may be as follows:

1. Chairperson
2. 1- 2 basic medical scientists
3. 1-2 clinicians from various Institutes
4. One legal expert or retired judge
5. One social scientist/ representative of non–governmental voluntary agency
6. One philosopher/ ethicist/ theologian
7. One lay person from the community
8. Member-Secretary

The ethical committee at any institution can have as its members, individuals from other institutions or communities if required. There should be adequate representation of age, gender, community, etc. in the Committee to safeguard the interests and welfare of all sections of the community / society. Members should be aware of local, social and cultural norms, as this is the most important social control mechanism. If required, subject experts could be invited to offer their views, for example for drug trials a pharmacologist, preferably a clinical pharmacologist, should be included. Similarly, based on the requirement of research area, for example HIV, genetic disorders etc. specific patient groups may also be represented in the Committee. The membership of IEC will include Epidemiologist(s), Sociologist(s), Lawyer(s), Theologian, Statistician(s), Clinician(s), Basic scientists, Pharmacist(s)/ Clinical Pharmacologist(s), etc. They should be appointed by the Head of the Institute based on their competencies and integrity, and could be drawn from any public or private Institute from anywhere in the country.

IEC should be constituted in the following pattern:

- i) A Chairperson
- ii) A Deputy Chairman, if need be,
- iii) A Member Secretary,
- iv) 5-15 members from different Departments / Specialties / disciplines or areas etc.