HHRI IBC Frequently Asked Questions

1.) What research/teaching activities require Institutional Biosafety Committee (IBC) Approval?

The Institutional Biosafety Committee is charged under the NIH guidelines for Research Involving Recombinant or synthetic nucleic acid molecules (r/sNA) molecules and MMRF Policy with additional oversight of all activities involving:

- Recombinant and synthetic NA (and RNA) including purchase, creation or use of transgenic plants and animals
- Biohazardous agents (e.g. bacteria, viruses, fungi, protozoa, prions)
- Human and non-human primate source material (e.g. blood, body secretions and tissues, primary and established cell lines)
- Select agents and Biologically Derived Toxins (including strain and amounts exempted from the select agent regulation)
- Any material requiring a CDC import license or a USDA permit

2.) Are there activities that do not require IBC review?

Yes the following activities do not require IBC review:

- Activities using only commercially available deregulated transgenic crops.
- Activities that involve only the in vitro use of nucleic acids (i.e., PCR, synthetic double stranded RNA) and does not involve the cloning and propagation of recombinant DNA in cells.

3.) My work is Exempt from NIH Guidelines, does it require IBC review?

If your work is exempt from the NIH guidelines, but does not fall under the categories listed in FAQ 2 it is still subject to IBC review. This includes exempt recombinant DNA (rDNA) and synthetic nucleic acid (SNA) activities under Section III-F of the NIH guidelines which must be reviewed and approved by the IBC.

4.) What aspects of the activities are reviewed by the IBC? Does this include a scientific review?

The fundamental consideration for the IBC in reviewing projects using r/sNA, and other biohazardous materials, is that the activities meet standards of good biological safety practice emphasizing protection of personnel, the general public, and the environment. The IBC is not responsible for the scientific review of the project, except in those cases where the scientific design of the studies contributes to or requires potentially unsafe or risky practices. In those cases, the IBC may require modifications that would reasonably mitigate the risk without impacting the research outcomes. Specifically the IBC reviews the following aspects of the study:

- Appropriate Biosafety level for proposed research
- Vectors and host systems used in the proposal
- Use of appropriate biosafety practices

- Potential for environmental release
- Suitable facilities, procedures, practices and training of personnel

5.) How often does the MMRF IBC Committee meet?

Due to the low number of protocols that are submitted, the MMRF IBC meets on an as needed basis. When is it necessary to meet in person as a committee, you will be invited to attend to present your protocol and answer any additional questions the committee may have for you.