The Belmont Report: Ethical Principles and Guidelines for the Human Subjects of Research

Beneficence

Definition: Beneficence - the quality or state of being beneficent. Beneficent: Kind, caring, humane, good-hearted, sympathetic and tender.

The principle of beneficence requires us to both protect the participant against risk of harm while considering not only the benefits for the individual, but also the societal benefits that might be gained from the research.

For instance, the IRB assures that the risks have been minimized and the benefits maximized to their fullest extent. If there are potential risks, we consider the justification. We make sure that the participants are informed of the alternatives.

Can you think of an example(s) of how you ensure that your research is conducted according to this principle? These may be some ways that you follow this principle:

- During your review of a drug or device study, you assess the resources necessary to conduct this study.
- You consider the experience of the study staff.
- You assess previous research results using this drug or device.
- You assess the project to determine if the magnitude of the risks is too great for your patients.
- You follow the patient/participant closely to assure that there are no unexpected adverse events.