



**The Ministry of Health
and
Health Research in the Cook
Islands**

**Policy
and
Procedures**

Cook Islands Ministry of Health Research Committee:

- 1. Secretary of Health;**
- 2. Manager of Dental Health;**
- 3. Health Promotion officer (Nutrition);**
- 4. Research Administrator (HR Manager);**
- 5. Manager of Research**
- 6. Obstetrician**

Ministry of Health Vision:

“All people living in the Cook Islands living healthier lives and achieving their aspirations”

MISSION STATEMENT

“Our mission is to maximise the benefits of Health research in the Cook Islands, for both Cook Islands people and researchers”.

The Cook Islands Ministry of Health encourages research in the Cook Islands which has benefits to the country and its people and aligns with the Ministry of Health (“MoH”) priorities. It is recommended that approval from the Cook Islands Ministry of Health Research Committee (CIMOHRM) and the Cook Islands National Research Committee is obtained before commencement of any research.

Many researchers are contracted by organisations working with the Cook Islands Government or non-governmental organisations. In such cases, despite the fact that the request for research may have originated within the Cook Islands, the details of the research proposal still need the approval of the CIMOHRM if it has a health component.

The Cook Islands Health Research Committee embraces the definition of research as defined by the New Zealand Tertiary Education Commission’s (“NZTEC”) Research Guidelines (2003) and used by the Cook Islands Research Council (“CIRC”). It is as follows:

Creative work undertaken on a systematic basis in order to increase the stock of knowledge, including knowledge of people, cultures and societies, and the use of this stock of knowledge to devise new applications. Research may be multi-disciplinary and may include a range of methodological approaches. Pacific research is informed by and embedded within the continuum of Pacific world views, knowledge, practices and beliefs, involves the active participation of Pacific peoples, and is relevant and responsive to their needs.

The Cook Islands Ministry of Health, welcomes research from prospective researchers and organisations wishing to carry out health research in the Cook Islands.

MINISTRY OF HEALTH RESEARCH POLICY 2014

Purpose:

This research policy is driven by a priority to safeguard the health interests of all people living in the Cook Islands. Through the management of a robust research framework, the Ministry of Health aims to promote health research activities in the Cook Islands that enhance the health, social and economic wellbeing of Cook Islands people. This policy will lead the CIMOHRC research activities to support MOH goals.

The following principles establish health related research policy in the Cook Islands:

Mandatory requirements:

Ministry of Health Act 2013

Health Strategy 2012-2016- Goal 3 objective 1 which elaborates that research should be promoted and a research strategy implemented.

Principles:¹

1. Applying research and policy to support evidence based policy program decisions and practices;
2. Building individual and organisational capacity to access, use and conduct research;
3. Communicating information about existing and new research activities and findings;
4. Fostering research collaboration through networking and partnerships;
5. Incorporating gender issues;
6. All health research activity conducted in the Cook Islands is subject to policy and the laws of the Cook Islands, including any domestic legislation and international obligations by way of treaty, which may impact upon research activities;
7. All researchers or individuals/organisations intending to carry out health research activity, must communicate with and abide by the administrative procedures and decisions of the Cook Islands Ministry of Health Research Council (CIMOHRC), which is governed by an approved Terms of Reference (*refer to TOR for details*), and serviced by a Research Administrator;
8. The CIMOHRC is charged with certain responsibilities under the TOR and forms the management basis of the MoH research framework. The CIMOHRC Research Administrator will oversee the operational processes and requirements for research approvals and related permits, and other obligations, as detailed in the MoH research process document;
9. Subject to this policy, and related procedures as prescribed under the administration by the CIMOHRC, all approved researchers agree to abide by the researcher obligations therein, including compliance with the submission of and accessibility to reports and documented information, monitoring and evaluation procedures, and full disclosure of any intellectual property issues.
10. The management process is crucial to the sustainability of beneficial research outcomes and related successes. This policy therefore acknowledges the importance of consultative

¹ **Please Note:** Health research activity encompasses any tasks by individuals, groups, institutions, or organisations, which involve but may not necessarily be restricted to, the study or investigation, collection, and/or processing of any data, samples, images, flora and fauna, marine or animal life, living or non-living material (organic or manufactured), and creative or scientific ideas and the functional performance thereof (whether traditional, cultural, or academic) for the purpose of producing a body of work for acknowledgement, commercial gain, or any degree of recognition by a third party which may have implications on the health of Cook Islanders.

processes and the inter-connectedness of stakeholders' relations. Wherever possible, the CIMOHRC will undertake to facilitate the concerns of researchers, as they may arise from time to time, particularly in the form of any appeals against certain conditions made, or enforcement of certain penalties on occasions of non-compliance. The CIMOHRC also acts as advocate for the interests of Government and all Cook Islands' stakeholders in managing policy and recommending directives for future development.

Objectives:

| Objective | Activity | Tasked to | timeline |
|---|---|---|--|
| Objective 1: improve the conduct of quality research through a well planned and flexible program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Establish committee and develop TOR for research committee date- 2015. | Research manager | 2015 |
| Objective 2: to annually review health priority needs and determine research areas | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Use health information systems data to prioritise research areas annually. Promote research and use the evidence gathered to inform and improve practice. Incorporate gender analysis on the differential impacts of the environmental determinants of health in research projects and studies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> HIU RESEARCH COMMITTEE RESEARCH COMMITTEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually Annually Annually |
| Objective 3: strengthen research capacity of the health workforce through continuous capacity building plan. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Providing opportunity to build local capacity through attachments carried out in country as well as attachments to universities/professional colleges which offer research methodology training. Continuous | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RESEARCH COMMITTEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Annually |
| Objective 4: improve the dissemination of research findings to relevant stakeholders. Ensure preliminary | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Publish findings to be submitted to the MOH. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> RESEARCH COMMITTEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> continuously |

| | | | |
|--|---|--|--|
| <p>findings are presented to the research committee and the MOH staff</p> | | | |
| <p>Objective 5: strengthen data collection and analysis for informed decision making. Training staff on clear data collection methodology and analysis in research and surveys.</p> | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote research and use the evidence gathered to inform practice and improve research for behaviour change strategies. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • RESEARCH COMMITTEE | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • continuously |

TERMS OF REFERENCE:

The Cook Islands Ministry of Health Research Committee (CIMOHRM) was established in 2013 for the following purposes:

1. Safeguard the interest of the Cook Islands people and their unique resources;
2. Improve the management of health research activities in the Cook Islands;
3. Engage Cook Islanders and MoH staff in research activities and processes to increase research capacity and capability;
4. Monitor the development and implementation of research/surveys/studies to provide evidence and information on health determinants, health system performance and health status;
5. Establish partnerships with relevant institutions for technical assistance in research if and when required;
6. Promote the transfer of knowledge and sharing and use of research;
7. Ensure approval of research is aligned to Ministry of Health priorities.

FUNCTIONS OF THE COOK ISLANDS MINISTRY OF HEALTH RESEARCH COMMITTEE:

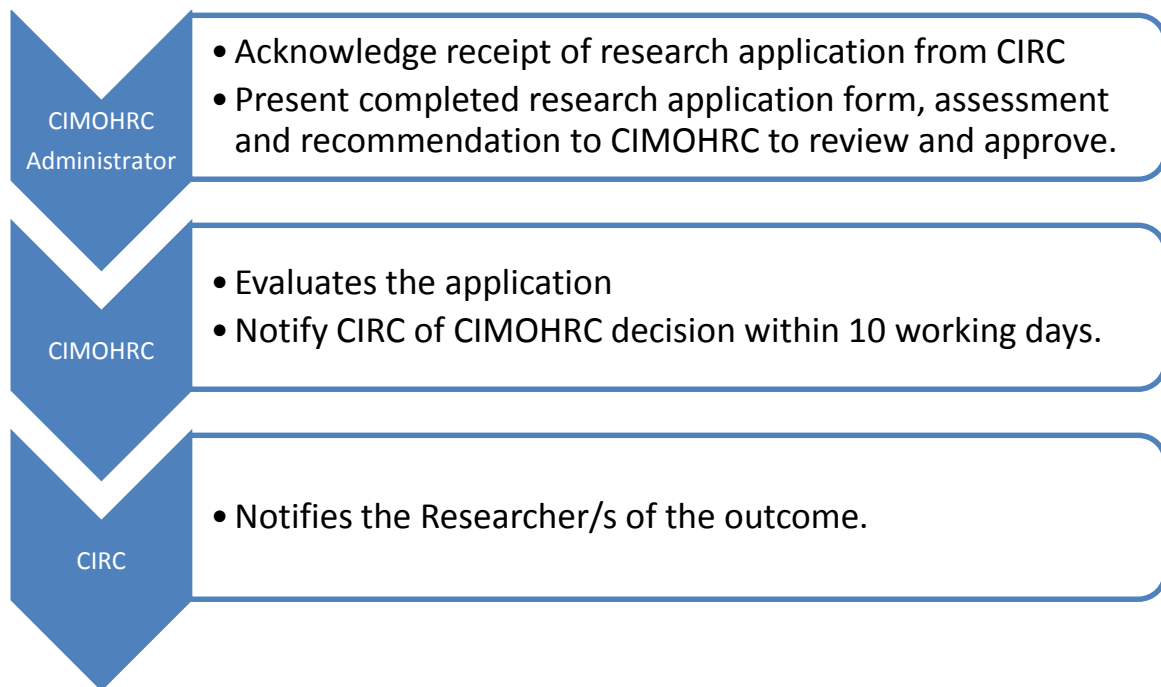
The functions of the Cook Islands Ministry of Health Research Committee include the following:

1. Screen all Health research proposals to ensure that procedures and particulars are in order;
2. Identify relevant Health research topic areas based on stakeholder and government research priorities, and promote to those interested in carrying out research in the Cook Islands;
3. Ensure that all Health research activities are appropriately aligned to the current MOH Health Strategy 2012-2016.

RESEARCH APPLICATION PROCESS:

Upon receipt of the research application form from the Cook Island Research Committee (CIRC), the CIMOHRC Research Administrator will carry out the following:

1. Acknowledge receipt of the research application ;
2. Present completed research application form, assessment and recommendation to CIMOHRC to review and approve;
3. Notify CIRC of CIMOHRC decision within 10 working days of CIMOHRC decision.
4. Should an application be presented directly to the Ministry of Health, this will be forwarded to the CIRC for processing as outlined in steps 1 to 3 above.



RESEARCHER OBLIGATIONS ON APPROVAL BY CIMOHRC:

1. Research Approval Conditions

The researcher will be able to commence their research activity on receipt of an approved letter from the CIMOHRC Research Administrator and approval by and receipt of research permit from the CIRC. This will detail the research activity proposed and outline key conditions that need to be adhered too. Failure to adhere will mean immediate suspension of the research approval. The researcher must also sign a statement of confidentiality prior to the commencement of the research project if personal or sensitive information is handled. The use of information/samples for testing is to be restricted to the requesting researcher, and not to be used for another study.

COMPLETION OF RESEARCH ACTIVITY:

Upon completion of the research, the researcher will be required to do the following:

1. Make arrangements with Research Administrator of CIMOHRC for a presentation to the Committee of the research findings;
2. Send 1 hard copy and one electronic copy of the final research document to the Administrator of CIMOHRC.
3. Send 2 copies of final research document to the Secretariat of the CIRC (the Office of the Prime Minister) as per the requirements for research approved by the CIRC.

HEALTH RESEARCH ASSESSMENT PROCEDURE:

Title of Research:

Name of Chief Investigator:

Criteria for Assessing Research Proposals:

Each research proposal is assessed on:

- A. Health Significance
- B. Scientific Merit
- C. Design and Methods, including ethics review
- D. Expertise and Track Record of the Research Team

Each research proposal is and scored 1 (low) to 7 (high) on each of the criteria:

A. Health Significance

Assessment of the health issue; advancement of knowledge relevant to health; and contribution to improvements in health and health outcomes in general and in the Cook Islands. Clearly articulate how the results will be communicated in the Cook Islands?

B. Scientific Merit

Potential to advance knowledge in the field; aims and hypotheses are presented; and originality of the approach;

C. Design and Methods

Study design; appropriateness of the research methods chosen; the validity of the proposed analyses; and the feasibility of attaining the statistical power sought (if appropriate);

Ethics review² – has the research been assessed as acceptable by a reputable ethics research committee? Are there are other ethical or cultural issues to consider? Do consent or information forms need review locally?

D. Expertise and Track Record of the Research Team

Academic qualifications of the researcher/research team; experience and knowledge in the proposed research area; and track record of publications and the dissemination of research results;

In the event that the research will be conducted by a team, the track record of each member of the team, i.e. Named Investigators, must be assessed. Consider the time or FTE dedicated by senior investigators on each proposal.

² Please note that ethical review will be obtained from the respective bodies/institutions that the researcher belongs too.

Health Research Assessment:

Title of Research

Name of Chief Investigator

Health Research Assessment Committee

| Criteria | Score | Comment |
|---|--------------|----------------|
| Health Significance | | |
| Scientific Merit | | |
| Design & methods, incl ethics review | | |
| Expertise & Track Record | | |

Monitoring and Evaluation framework:

| Applicati on received | Date reviewed | Date decisio n sent to CIRC | Name of research er | Name of research | Brief synopsis of research | Any issues | Start date of researc h | End date of researc h | Follow up at end of research. |
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