UNIVERSIDAD CENTRAL DEL CARIBE
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

UCC Community:

Due to COVID-19 emergency, the UCC/IRB is issuing a temporary statement to be followed by all researchers. The IRB recommends the followings:

- Pausing all research protocols with human participants involving in-person interactions/interventions that had been evaluated and approved by the UCC/IRB prior to the emergency. These restrictions will be in place until the quarantine is lifted by our administration. These suggestions should be provisional and they might change, as additional information is available and always in accordance with administrative recommendations.

- Any research procedures that involve in-person interactions/interventions with participants must be immediately paused. Research procedures involving no direct in-person interaction/intervention with participants may continue (e.g. data analysis, online surveys, telephone interviews). This applies to both exempt and non-exempt research studies.

- During the pause, Investigators should consider whether it is feasible to modify, eliminate or minimize their in-person research procedures to use alternative methods for data gathering (e.g. telephone, online, Zoom, Skype, or other means). If alternative methods to in-person participation are feasible, investigators are encouraged to do so by submitting an amendment to the study in order to secure IRB approval prior to the implementation of changes. If the study cannot be conducted without the in-person participant interaction/intervention, then new participant enrollment and any ongoing in-person participant interactions/interventions must be immediately paused.

- An investigator may implement changes to approved research prior to obtaining IRB approval if such changes are necessary to eliminate apparent immediate hazards to the participants as provided for in federal regulations (45 CFR 46.108(a)(3)(iii) under the 2018 Rule. In such cases, the principal investigator must promptly notify the IRB of any changes as soon as possible.

- If pausing the research protocol might have direct harm to participants, these studies may continue subject to the following: any in-person participant interactions/ interventions must be minimized and alternatives for in-person data collection should be considered if feasible. Investigators should consider their ability to continue with the research based on current and future staffing resources and facility restrictions. Investigators should consider the rapidly changing environment of the pandemic and plan for research continuity, such as facility closures, illness of research team or lack of required personal protective equipment. New participants should not be enrolled without prior permission from the IRB. Projects actively studying COVID-19 should also follow all recommendations.

- Investigators and their research personnel should work with their study sponsors and others to evaluate impacted studies and develop a plan appropriate to their research procedures, including financial considerations. (*References from Ponce Research Institute*)

Frances L. García
IRB President