



RESEARCH IMPROVEMENTS THROUGH HARMONIZATION IN MANITOBA (RITHIM) UPDATE

BACKGROUND

RITHIM is a provincial initiative involving multiple stakeholders with a goal to build a best-in-class provincial program for health research in Manitoba. RITHIM is unique across Canada in that it will harmonize ethics, privacy, and institutional impact review processes, creating a more efficient process for health research reviews in Manitoba.

The full launch of the RITHIM program and the RITHIM Provincial Research Administration System (RITHIM-PRAS) will streamline more than 25 different submission and approval processes into a single harmonized application form for ethics, privacy, and institutional impact review. RITHIM will also be the catalyst for future change in the health research initiation process, with the goal of improving time-to-conduct, making Manitoba more competitive, attracting industry investment, and enhancing Manitoba's potential for research partnerships.

RITHIM TECHNICAL ACTIVITIES

Research Manitoba has been working on building the research administration system to support RITHIM (RITHIM-PRAS). Despite this hard work, it became increasingly apparent that the system under development was not going to be successful. Originally, the University of Manitoba (UM) Research Administration System (UM-RAS) and RITHIM-PRAS were designed as a shared electronic solution, with common elements and many complex dependencies. The complexity of that system and the prolonged period of ongoing development has led to the decision by the Research Manitoba Board of Directors to terminate the current system build and move toward a search for an alternate vendor. In an effort to minimize future risk for the health research community, Research Manitoba is proceeding to secure a separate vendor with separate hosting to provide a technology platform to support the RITHIM-PRAS system. A Request for Proposals was issued on October 11, 2023.

We recognize this process has been long, and we understand the importance and need for full implementation of RITHIM. Thank you to all our stakeholders in the health research community for your input and involvement to date. We ask for your continued support as we move through this next phase. It will be essential to our shared success.

The need for RITHIM has not changed, nor has the commitment of stakeholders. The Manitoba government, Research Manitoba Board of Directors, University of Manitoba leadership as well as health system leadership all understand and support the need to streamline and harmonize the review processes for health research in Manitoba. The commitment remains strong to develop RITHIM with a predictable and reliable electronic solution.

Research Manitoba has made significant strides in developing the framework for a post RITHIM world. Requirements developed for the RITHIM-PRAS solution, including application form content, RITHIM workflows, and RITHIM correspondence templates will be leveraged to gain efficiencies. All efforts will be made to ensure the implementation of a RITHIM-PRAS solution is completed without additional undue delay.

OTHER RITHIM BUSINESS ACTIVITIES

Since our last update, the RITHIM team has been hard at work, ensuring all the business requirements for a successful launch of the full RITHIM program are in place. Some recent activities include:

- Building business processes to support the future state of RITHIM, including establishment of harmonization processes.
- Defining how institutional impact reviews will integrate with RITHIM and holding the first meeting of the health system impact delegates.
- Transition planning with post-secondary institutions.
- Developing training plans and materials.
- Developing a new RITHIM website.

COMMITTEE FOR HARMONIZED HEALTH, IMPACT, PRIVACY AND ETHICS REVIEW (CHIPER)

RITHIM has been working on several CHIPER governance initiatives to support CHIPER's mandate to provide robust review of health research ethics, as outlined in the Tri-Council Policy Statement: Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2). These initiatives include:

- The development of CHIPER policies and procedures with the recent approval of Chair, Vice-Chair and Member Terms of Reference.
- CHIPER Standard Operating Procedures based on the national N2-CARN2/CAREB-ACCER REB SOPs which will be finalized to coincide with launch.
- A CHIPER Appeals Process as required in compliance with TCPS2.
- Finalized participant informed consent guidance for the transition to CHIPER.

PROVINCIAL HEALTH RESEARCH PRIVACY COMMITTEE (PHRPC)

PHRPC, with administrative support from RITHIM, recently completed a very successful first full fiscal year of operations. In its first year, the committee saw a 90% increase in new submission volume compared to the annual average seen by the former Manitoba government Health Information Privacy Committee (HIPC). The increase is attributed to PHRPC's broader scope, reviewing use of

personal health information for research purposes, from all Manitoba trustees. Despite the large increase in volume, PHRPC met all its review cycle targets for the year, reviewing 91% of new applications within 30 days.

PHRPC, at its last full committee meeting, welcomed four new members and added the new role of Committee Vice-Chair. The Vice-Chair role was created in response to high submission volumes, in order to assist the Chair and maintain reviews of amendments in a timely fashion. RITHIM will continue reviewing PHRPC processes to identify opportunities for additional efficiencies as the committee evolves.

NEXT STEPS

RITHIM is committed to the implementation of a high quality and dependable electronic solution that will support the RITHIM program to benefit Manitoba's health research community. We will continue to engage with the community to ensure, both now and going forward, that whatever tools are implemented will meet your needs. Thank you to all our stakeholders for your involvement to date and continued support.

Specific dates and detailed information regarding the launch of RITHIM-PRAS will be communicated once they are known. Until then, RITHIM continues to operate in a transitional state, supporting the monthly operations of PHRPC and CHIPER.

Please visit www.rithim.ca for more information and updates. Questions can also be sent directly to RITHIM@researchmb.ca.

To facilitate broad communication, we request your organization to consider distributing and posting the above information.