Top 10 things you can do to improve your REB application:
Avoiding common errors in research ethics submissions

1. Complete the **online Course on Research Ethics**, Tri-Council Policy Statement (TCPS 2) found at http://tcps2core.ca/welcome. This will introduce you to the key principles of research ethics and help you prepare to present the ethical implications of your proposed research to the Research Ethics Board.

2. **Plan ahead** to ensure you have plenty of time to prepare your submission and go through one or more rounds of REB review before your planned study start date. You will normally receive your initial review within 4 weeks, but the vast majority of submissions require at least one set of revisions/clarifications. Leave enough time for the entire review process (initial submission, round(s) of revisions until approval – plan for at least 8 weeks) before the planned start date of your research. Each time an ethical review is required, allow 4 weeks for a response.

3. **Read and follow the submission instructions and guidelines**. Failure to do so commonly results in incomplete applications, insufficient information in the appropriate sections, missing appendices (e.g. copies of recruitment material, screening material, verbal scripts, study instruments). Follow the **consent form guidance template** to avoid missing information. Ensure that consent forms and all documents that go to potential participants that are grammatically correct and written in **lay language**.

4. Explain the reason for the study being done at all. The science of a study – including the **study justification** – becomes an ethical concern if there is not sufficient reason for doing the research, or the study is inadequately designed to produce valid results. It is unethical to subject participants to any procedures likely to produce dubious results, even if it will simply waste their time.

5. Provide a detailed description of what a participant will be asked to do from the **participant's perspective**. Only collect information you need to conduct your study.

6. Provide a step-by-step description of how the **recruitment** and **informed consent process** will be handled (including initial and on-going consent). Who, what, when, where and how, should all be addressed. Do not simply refer to an attached consent form (although that will be required too).

7. **Proofread** your submission. Avoid providing inconsistent information in various sections of the submission (e.g. protocol details that are contradicted in consent documents). If reviewers aren't clear on the proposed research plan, the Board will need clarification before approval can be granted.

8. **Avoid role confusion** (for the participant and researcher) for researchers with dual roles (e.g. professional role and researcher role). Faculty and students often fail to address the power relations inherent in the hierarchical relationships of teacher-learner, health professional-patient or service provider-service recipient.

9. Avoid over/understated **risk/benefit assessment**. Cite "minimal risk" rather than "no risk"; identify risks and describe risk mitigation plans. Be realistic in your description of the benefits of research.

10. Present a complete **plan for data security**, retention, storage and destruction (as applicable) over the life of the project. It is often appropriate to describe electronic data security measures, including file encryption and password protection.